

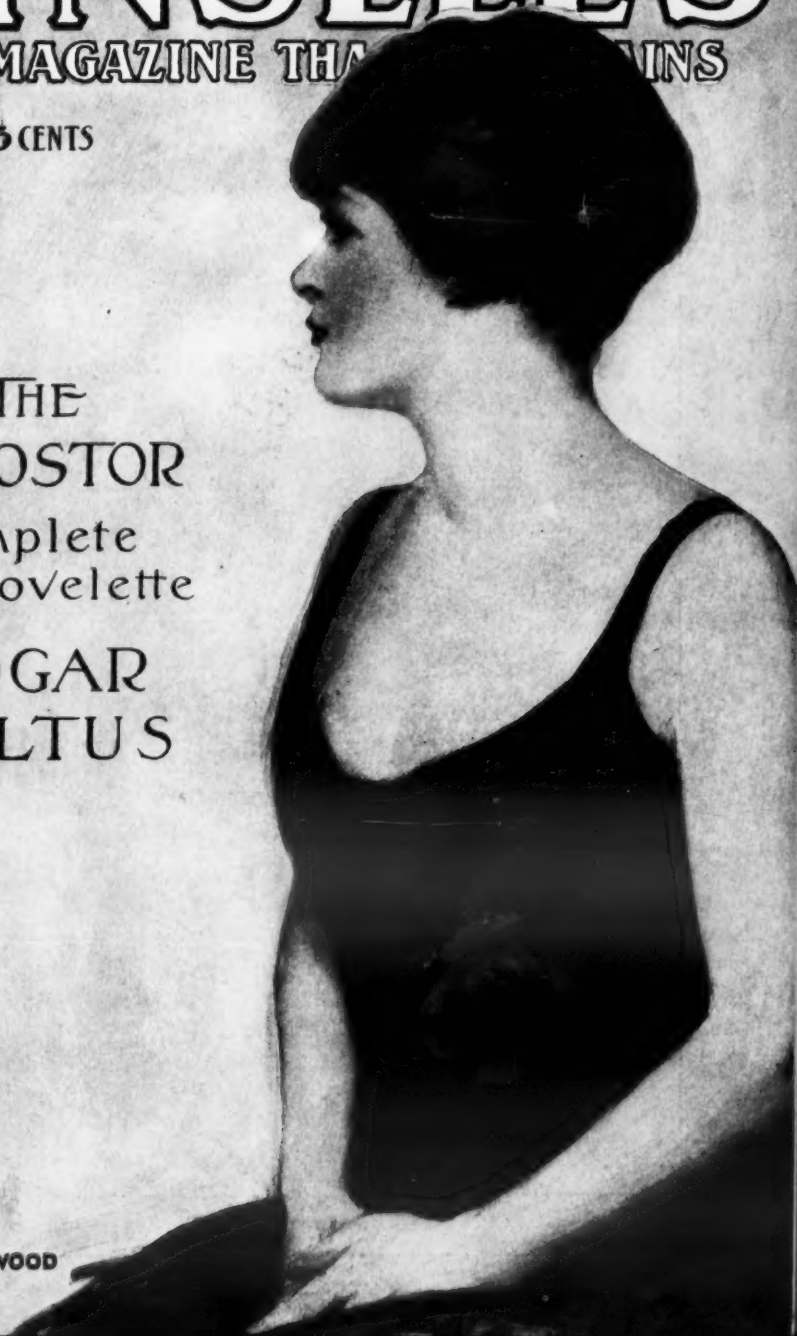
AINSLIE'S

THE MAGAZINE THAT GAINS

MAY 1917 • 15 CENTS

THE
IMPOSTOR
A Complete
Novelette
by EDGAR
SALTUS

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1917



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The Magazine That Entertains

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YEARLY SUBSCRIPTION, \$1.90

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AINSLEE'S

VOL. XXXIX.

MAY, 1917.

No. 4.



The Impostor

By Edgar Saltus

Author of "The Poms of Satan,"
"Imperial Purple," etc.



CHAPTER I.

AS the old man, after shoving the package into the safe, piled the money in on top of it, he was conscious of being watched. At the moment, you could have heard a lizard move. With a lizard's rapidity, he turned. There was no one. Save for himself—for the safe, the chairs, the books, the immense table—the large, high-ceiled room was vacant.

For a moment he hesitated. Then, at once going to the table, he touched a button, sat down, and began to write.

898 West Eighty-ninth Street, New York,
4th November, 1915.

I, George Gorgias Vulper, declare this to be my last will and testament.

I direct—

At the door came a knock, and a withered servant, his face inextricably wrinkled, appeared. Vulper looked up.

"Archibald, telephone to Doctor Dix. Ask him to come here at once."

"Yes, sir."

Before the servant could go, Vulper again was at it.

I give, devise, and bequeath to my son, Michael Vulper, the copyright of my work entitled "Commentaries on the Sutras of Patanjali." I give, devise, and bequeath to my nephew, Arthur Glendenning, the sum of one dollar, free from inheritance tax and executors' fees. I give, devise, and bequeath to the director and curators of the British Museum, London, my manuscript entitled "Alpha and Omega." I give, devise, and bequeath to Shri Shankira my best wishes here and hereafter. The rest and residue of my property, of whatever kind, nature, and description, and wheresoever situated, of which I die seized and possessed, I give, devise, and bequeath to my ward, Camille Marcy, and to her heirs, executors, and assigns forever. I appoint the Amsterdam Trust Company—

The hurrying pen tripped and made a blot. Before Vulper could dry it, there was another knock, and a man with eyeglasses and a professional beard came in.

Vulper nodded at him.

"Dix, I want you to witness my will—you and Archibald. Will you look at it?"

The physician took the paper, glanced at it, and asked:

"Where is the manuscript?"

Vulper motioned at the safe.

"In that package under the junk."

Dix moved over and looked in.

"There seems to be no end to that junk. You ought to——"

"Only ten thousand," Vulper interrupted. "If it looks big, it's because it's all in twenty-dollar bills. I intended it for Mike, but I've changed my mind."

"Yes, he told me. He was in my office to-day."

"What about?"

"Several things. And you leave him a copyright!" Dix, examining the will again, exclaimed. "That's very paternal. I doubt if it will stand."

"Mike won't contest it. Besides, he's nobody's fool. He'll get along."

Dix rattled the paper.

"It's a pity, though, about his appearance. It would handicap any one else. But really, now, this nonsense about Shri! If the facts were known, you'd be judged incompetent and the will thrown out."

Vulper took it in.

"You're probably right. I'll do it over and omit that."

"And you leave everything to Miss Marcy?"

"I can't do otherwise. It came to me from her father."

"Well, it's none of my business. But that manuscript, now. If it were read in court, it would queer your will. It's all like Shri—the result of auditory and ocular hallucinations."

Vulper nodded.

"To you—yes. You're a physician—therefore, a materialist. You believe, as brutes do, only in the reality of things. And yet, as a physician, you ought to recognize the potentialities of the pineal gland. They have taken me to strange places; they have shown me strange things. I can no more prove it to you than I can dazzle a blind man. But the fact that I can see things which to you are invisible should be as com-

prehensible as that a composer can hear combinations of sounds to which you are deaf."

"Oh, as for that, if I wanted to, I could see things myself. With morphine, apparitions can be scientifically produced. Only we don't call them apparitions; we call them manifestations of morbid activity in certain clusters of the brain cells." The physician paused and added: "That reminds me. Are you still taking chloral? You are? I told you not to. It's a stupid thing to take at any age, but at yours it's fatal."

Vulper smiled. He was old and he looked it, but his face displayed that strength which is possessed only by those who know neither greed nor envy, neither hope nor fear. In strength such as that, there is infinite indulgence, equal unconcern; and that his smile expressed.

"If you're trying to alarm me, you'll hardly succeed. Only the unevolved fear death. What they should fear is life."

Dix, who had been standing, sat down.

"Mr. Vulper, you have nothing to complain of. Life has treated you very well."

"Hasn't it, now? It's been a wonderful experience. Twenty years ago, I didn't have a dollar. I haven't earned one since, and yet I have a quarter of a million, for which, now that my manuscript is done, I have no longer the slightest need."

"Yes, you told me. Miss Marcy's father divided his property between you and his daughter and made you her guardian."

"And in so doing, afforded me the leisure to write that manuscript. It was more than decent of him—particularly as he had no other reason than that I saw things concerning him, things that affected him vitally, things

that at first he could not credit, but that——"

"Things of the same order as Shri?" the physician, with professional intolerance, got in.

Vulper sat back on his hobby.

"Totally different. I can understand, though, that you don't believe in him. Yet I showed you his letter."

"A letter—yes. One that any crank might have sent you. It mentioned some book or other and warned you of the author's fate."

Vulper raised a hand.

"This country is full of cranks. I doubt if one of them ever heard of the book, or of Delormel who wrote it. The book, entitled 'La Période Solaire'—'The Solar Period'—was published in France. There, the law requires that of every book published, two copies shall be deposited in the National Library. The arrangements in that institution were such that no book had ever been stolen from it. Two copies of this book were deposited there. In twenty-four hours, they had vanished. In twenty-four hours, not a copy of the book was obtainable anywhere, and the man who wrote it was killed."

Dix sniffed.

"By Shri?"

"Or some other Brahman."

"But why?"

"Because the book revealed secrets that the esoteric sections of the Upanishads contain and which only the Brahman hierarchy may approach."

"And Delormel got at them?"

"If you want to put it in that way, yes. Only he did it in the same manner in which I secured the data for my manuscript—out of the fourth dimension."

Dix, plucking at his beard, said, and severely enough:

"The fourth dimension is a mathematical dream."

Serenely the old man nodded.

"To the mathematician, perhaps.

But not to the occultist. To him it is an actual plane on which he functions at will. That is what Swedenborg did, what Delormel did, what I have done. In the fourth dimension, I saw the past and the future. My manuscript contains them both. I say, Dix! You're thinking I ought to be locked up."

So neat and sure was the thrust that before it the physician backed.

"No, not that exactly. But I was thinking that if any other man told me what you have, I'd stand ready to sign his commitment."

"Which reminds me. It's my will I want you to sign, or, rather, to witness. I told you Mike wouldn't contest it. That's because I took a look ahead to-day and I couldn't see any contest. But then I couldn't see any will either, and because of that, and of other things, I'm in a hurry to make one. What is it, Archibald?"

Noiselessly the withered servant had entered.

"Doctor Dix's secretary has telephoned. Mrs. Gehm is dying."

Dix picked up his hat. With one hand, the old man stayed him; the other he pressed to his head.

"Mrs. Gehm? I've got her. Her name belies her, though. She's a fat woman in a wig. She'll die of a motor accident in a thunderstorm." He dropped his hands and added: "This is November. Assuming that the lady remains in New York, she has still five or six months to the good."

Dix laughed; he couldn't help it. The portrait of his patient had been exact.

"All the same," he said, "I'll have to go. I'll be back, though, shortly."

"Thank you. Please do," replied Vulper, who scribbled on the will and tore it in two.

Meanwhile, in the drawing-room on the floor below, Camille Marcy, in breeches and boots, a man's coat and a derby, was being talked at by Glenden-

ning, Vulper's nephew, a superior young man who did something in the insurance line and whose long face gave him the thoroughbred air of a horse.

Camille lacked that distinction. A nice, candid-looking girl of sweet-and-twenty, with good eyes, good features, a very good nose, and fair hair—which was docked—she had the appearance of having no nonsense, or at any rate very little of it, about her.

The room, comfortably and long since summarily furnished with articles selected haphazard by an occultist in a hurry, was ugly, but not depressing, for its ugliness was attenuated by this girl, whom Glendenning was asking to marry him.

Like getting up in the morning or having dinner, it was a habit of his. Camille had money of her own, enough for two—enough even in New York, where living costs everybody a little more than he has got—and Glendenning, who lived in a boarding house and had nothing except what he made, saw no reason why she should not honorably support him. He quite counted on it.

But Camille had no more idea of taking him than she had of jumping out of the window. Again and again she had told him so. Again and again he had whinnied and returned to the charge. Now, as he was prancing at her again, Mike Vulper looked in.

In the doorway, his figure showed straight and supple, but his face was sinister. It suggested a mask clapped there by nature in derision. Quasimodo must have had just such another. He was hideous.

Many are without suspecting it, but he had no illusions. Formerly felons were branded on the face; like their chains, it was part of the penalty. And it may be that, because of some forgotten sin committed in an unremembered life, this mask was his punishment.

Otherwise he was free—apparently, that is, for actually he was chained. Hoops stronger than steel bound him to Camille. He loved her. Fancy a worm in love with a star! But fancy, too, common sense on the part of the worm, and the latter will know that the star is out of reach. Mike needed no one to tell him that. A mirror can be very instructive.

Now, as he entered the room, Glendenning turned, scowled, and, precisely as if he were eating ice, addressed him.

"And how is my cousin to-day?"

In the same voice, in the same tone, in the same manner, with a power of mimicry that was disconcerting, instantly Mike repeated the question. It was as if Glendenning had asked it twice.

Camille laughed and showed her teeth, which were well worth showing.

"Mike, you ought to be on the stage."

Glendenning's scowl deepened.

"Yes, as *Romeo*."

Without heat, Mike took it up.

"Perhaps I may. I may surprise you yet, Glendenning."

As he spoke, he moved to the girl, dropped his voice, whispered at her.

At that Glendenning fairly neighed.

"Ha! It won't be with your manners, then! Good night, Camille."

Camille nodded and turned to Mike. When they had both been younger, his face had frightened her. Latterly she had become accustomed to it as one does become accustomed to anything. In the interim, she had been in Europe, and he in this country. It was only since the war that they had been under this roof, which belonged to his father, her guardian.

"I wish you were blind," he told her, when Glendenning had gone. "If you were, you would marry me. As it is, I'm off."

Camille, who had been standing, sat down.

"Where to, Mike?"

From a pocket, he took a paper and, in taking it, took also another, which fell at her feet. The first, which was partially engraved, had on it particulars concerning him; also his photograph. He displayed it.

"This is a passport. With it, I had intended to go to France and join the Foreign Legion. But yesterday my father changed his mind about something, and since then I have changed mine."

He stooped and recovered the fallen paper, at which, as he did so, she looked.

"What is that? A *Medical Record*? Mike! You're not going to be a physician, are you? A physician in the family is so reassuring. Just like a fire-escape."

He shook his head.

"That's just a thing I happened on in Dix's office. He wants it back. No, I'm going away to join a friend of mine."

"Who? What is his name?"

For a second he hesitated.

"Victor Revell."

The girl considered him.

"I never heard you speak of him before."

Mike fumbled in his waistcoat.

"You never heard me speak of anything but you, Camille. You won't any more. Now, before I go, will you do me a favor?"

"A dozen."

Into her hand he put a silver coin, at which she stared and exclaimed:

"Why, it's a five-franc piece! What in the world——"

Mike nodded at her.

"It's what gamblers call a luck piece. I want you to keep it for me. Promise that you will."

"I promise. But you must do something for me. You must write."

He took her hand.

"I have every intention of doing so. May I kiss you good-by?"

She nodded, but she closed her eyes.

When she opened them, he was in the hall.

In the hall was the stair. He went on and up. At the top was darkness. It engulfed him.

In this life, Camille was never to see his face again—except once, long later, when she thought she did. Yet in that, as will appear, she was perhaps mistaken.

CHAPTER II.

Camille got up and looked at the clock, which marked seven. Usually at that hour she dined, having dressed beforehand. But on this evening, after returning from a run with a chum, Kate Delafield, she had been waylaid by the cook, then by Glendenning, finally by Mike, and she had had no time to change.

She was none the less hungry and she went back into the dining room, which, situated in an extension, was in a measure separated from the rest of the house. There the lights were on, the table was set. On a sideboard was bread, fruit, a salad, a decanter of claret, a brace of cold partridges; also, an evening paper.

Camille rang and took up the paper, which told of the misery that is the garment of Europe and of the gayety that is the parure of New York. The moderate irony of it missed her. But then one gets satiated with horrors, and, telling herself she was glad that Mike had changed his mind about going abroad, she rang again.

Then, as no one came, she put the food on the table, sat down, and began to eat. The partridge was good, and though, ordinarily, she would have preferred something hot, she was too hungry to care. The salad, too, might have been worse—and better, for in the preparation of the dressing, there had been a noticeable absence of brains. But that, too, she let pass and, while eating it, wondered whether Mr. Vulper was

coming down and, in that case, whether he would have more to tell her about Shri.

That creature interested her enormously. She did not in the least believe in him, but the things he did, or was credited with doing, delighted her. He could be in two places at once, and if you happened on him where he had no business to be—in, for instance, Mr. Vulper's study at the head of the stairs—he would break like a bubble and vanish.

Gymnastics of that high order appealed to her as unsurpassed by anything she had ever read.

"But how can he be so wickedly lovely?" she had at dinner, only the day before, asked of Mr. Vulper, who had referred her to his "Sutras of Patanjali"—which, when she had first heard of them, she had thought must be something from the chemists, but which, she had since become skeptically aware, taught of union with the supersensible; taught of the supernormal powers which that union confers; taught, too, how the advanced pupil may exteriorize himself from the body, project himself through space, materialize partially or wholly, appear and disappear at will.

"But why should this duck of a darling want to play flying trapeze with himself like that?" she had also asked, and had been told that among the apes and peacocks of the apricot temples at Benares, there are priests whose duty it is to guard the arcana of their immemorial lore.

"Such things," the old man continued, "are not for everybody—at all events not for nobodies who talk about nothing—yet, while they can be safely divulged to scholars, it is just that that Shri is trying to prevent. Well, my dear, perhaps he may, perhaps he may," Vulper, with philosophic fatalism, had added.

Camille, at the time, had decided that he was as mad as a hatter, as mad

as two hatters, as mad as Lincoln and Bennett, but none the less the most adorable old dear in the world. And now, as she hacked at one of the partridges, she wondered whether he would be coming down with more tales of Shri's high jinks.

Behind her something moved. She half turned and, catching a side view of Archibald, exclaimed at him:

"I rang and rang! This salad is —"

"Beg pardon, mem. Mr. Mike wanted a taxi, and just now I had to let Doctor Dix in. Would you wish some soup, mem? There's a filet of sole and——"

"For Heaven's sake! I can't eat backward! Get me some coffee. Isn't Mr. Vulper coming down?"

"I'll see, mem."

He turned and went, and the girl took up again the paper, in which she found a fashion article that, like the salad, lacked brains. Before she had finished, Archibald was again behind her.

"Well?" she asked, without looking up.

After a moment, getting no other answer than the inarticulate sound that some people make when eating, she turned and saw that the servant looked like a ghost with a stomach ache. Quite white, he was opening and closing his mouth. Calmly she surveyed him.

"What is the matter with you?"

Archibald swallowed.

"It's Mr. Vulper, mem."

"Well, what about him?"

He swallowed again.

"Oh, mem, I don't rightly know. But Doctor Dix, he——"

Camille was on her feet so quickly that she overturned the chair. She ran through the drawing-room, out into the hall, and up the stairs to the study at the head of them. There, in a chair, one arm pendant, his head hanging over it, the old man lay. Bending over him

was Dix. As Camille entered, the physician straightened, looked at her.

"Cardiac paralysis," he announced.

Camille's hands had gone to her throat. In her riding costume, she always looked like a handsome boy. Now she looked like a thoroughly frightened one. From her eyes two round tears leaped like beads. Ever since she could remember, the dead man had been good to her. Though no relative whatever, he had been father and mother to this girl who now, in all the world, had no one—except a trust company, which is without a soul.

A sense of desolation, immense, unescapable, swept over her. She had so taken him for granted! The fact that he was old had never troubled her. It was natural for him to be old. She could not remember that he had ever been anything else. And now he had gone. The memory of little negligences to him came and hurt her. But behind it, behind everything, was the consciousness, selfish, yet human, that she was alone.

Dix, who had moved from the chair to the table and who had in his hand a paper, was talking at her, though about what she did not know. But gradually she realized that what he was saying concerned a will. As if she cared!

But he was showing it to her—a sheet of paper, torn in two, half covered with the dead man's writing, across which was scrawled, "Shri Shankira."

Utterly unstrung, at sight of that, for a second she stared, then she screamed.

For that one second, before her had passed a vision of apes, of peacocks, of apricot temples, and of some priest of Siva, recovering there from a catalepsy, self-induced, during which his entity, exteriorized, had crossed the seas, gibbered at Vulper, and—

It was then that she screamed.

"He killed him?"

Dix, tossing the paper aside, turned sharply to her.

"What do you mean?"

But now, though still unstrung, the girl's common sense was asserting itself.

"I thought you meant that Shri had done it."

"I meant nothing of the kind," Dix impatiently retorted. "This Shri business he wrote himself. Only an hour ago, I warned him, and for the twentieth time, that at his age chloral was fatal. It was that that did it. I can't be sorry enough. Apart from which, he had intended to leave you everything. Now it will all go to Mike, and you'll be put in the street. Where is Mike?"

"Mike? He's gone."

Dix, moving from the table, looked in at the open safe, looked closer, fumbled it with his eyes, plucked at his beard, and turned.

"There was a pile of money there and a package. They've disappeared."

That disappearance he momentarily considered. Then he dismissed it.

"Bah! He may have thrown them out of the window. He was quite capable of it."

But there were other things to be attended to, and, seeing that the girl, for the time being at least, was totally unstrung, he went back to the table and rang.

CHAPTER III.

"Don't say you won't change your mind," Glendenning, with his equine air, was protesting at Camille, whose being put into the street was, of course, entirely figurative.

After the funeral and the rush of reporters who, from the inexperienced girl, had pulled more than they had expected—the will unsigned and destroyed, the sudden demise, the missing manuscript, the missing money, the missing heir, out of all of which they made very good copy—after that, the public administrator had stepped in,

and notices had appeared announcing that "the People of the State of New York, by the grace of God free and independent, sent greeting to Michael Vulper, whose residence could not, after diligent inquiry, be ascertained, and citing him" and so forth and so forth.

But the greeting of the free and independent people had been ignored; so also had the citation. On the verbiage of both, Mike had appeared to be obscurely, but disdainfully turning his back. Yet, everything being possible, it may have been that neither had reached him; precisely as it may also have been that he was otherwise engaged.

Meanwhile, around the corner, on Riverside Drive, Camille had taken an apartment, furnished it after a fashion of her own, which was partly New York and partly Peking, put herself and the servants into it, and later had gone with Kate Delafield to Aiken.

There various young men had said the same thing to her. But as, from long practice, they had one and all acquired the art of making any subject uninteresting, their conversation had not affected her heart, her dreams, her golf, her runs, or her return. It had been January when she had gone South. Now it was April.

"No," Glendenning repeated. "Don't say it. Changing the mind is cleanly and therefore hygienic. My departed uncle had a room that he used for no other purpose."

Camille, seated in a hand-painted chair, looked out at the moon and at the river, then at the Chinese lamps, at the draped and grand piano, at the portières, on which silver dragons roamed, and finally at this superior young man, who was also seated.

Between her chair and his, there was a space, which mentally she surveyed. It amounted, she judged, to about thirty-six inches. But in those inches

there were miles, thousands of them. If he had been talking from a kloof of inner Africa, he could not have been farther away.

None the less, he represented to her that curious thing which is called a link. He connected her with the past, with the old man whom she had loved, with his son, whom she had liked. And, moreover, he and she now had—at any rate, he claimed that they had—interests in common; interests, that is, in the final disposition of the decedent's estate, concerning which he had long since retained a fat shyster named Tatum, to whom he negligently referred as his counsel.

"You don't, perhaps, care for me yet—" he was saying.

"And that," Camille wickedly cut in, "is such an advantage. I could have no disillusiones."

"On the other hand," Glendenning, smoothing his white tie, continued, "you know that I do care for you."

Camille laughed.

"You are so persuasive! Poor Mike wasn't in it with you."

"Why poor? He has only to show up to step into a fortune," retorted Glendenning, who earnestly hoped that Mike would do nothing of the kind; for, if he omitted to, then, after the legal delays, that fortune he, as next of kin, would inherit.

Camille looked down at a floor pillow at her feet, kicked it aside, stood up, and made a pass with her hands.

"I can't account for it, and the fact that I can't torments me. It seems as if it were my fault. When he said he was going away, I should have made him say where. Instead of which, I asked him to write. He never has. Yet he must be somewhere."

Glendenning nodded.

"In the fourth dimension."

Camille turned on him.

"I'll thank you not to jest on a sub-

ject that to Mr. Vulper was an article of faith!"

With entire ease, Glendenning tacked. "Excuse me. I meant in the grave, for there he is, unless"—"he is in prison," he was about to add, but instead he said—"unless he went blind."

Again Camille turned on him.

"I must be blind, too. I don't see what you are driving at."

"Then I'll tell you. The death of the author of a book of commentaries on the sutras of—of some jellyfish of a Hindu spook; the death of an occultist who had devoted twenty years of his life to a manuscript which departed when he did; the death of a recluse who for no obvious reason inherited half of your father's estate—the death of an individual so unusual does not take place without comment. For forty-eight hours afterward, the papers dripped with his name, with the missing money, the missing manuscript, the missing heir. Mike must have read of it, unless, as I say, he went blind. Even so, unless in going blind he went deaf, there must have been others to tell him. But all that is preposterous. There is a fortune awaiting him. Why doesn't he come and claim it?"

Camille yawned and sat down.

"I wish you would tell me."

Glendenning pulled at his cuff.

"Perhaps I can. But you know that, in spite of Mike's very unfortunate appearance, you had rather a tender feeling for him."

Impatiently the girl took it up.

"What of it? And anyway I had no more intention of marrying him than I have of marrying you."

Glendenning gulped, swallowed, and corrected it.

"No more immediate intention, you mean. But now will that tender heart of yours prevent you from considering certain facts?"

"Dear me," thought Camille, "I wish he would go!"

But she said:

"Well, what are they?"

Glendenning raised a hand, the fingers extended.

"I'll show you. On the night my uncle died, Mike said good-by to you, went upstairs, sent Archibald for a taxi, and left the house. That is a fact, is it not?"

Camille nodded.

"Previously Dix had been with my uncle, who then was in his usual health. Dix was called away. Mike had hardly gone when Dix returned and found my uncle dead. There you have another fact. And here is one more—in the will that my uncle intended to execute, Mike was cut off."

"And so were you."

"No matter about that. To go back to Dix. My uncle sent for him to witness this will, and while they were discussing it, he showed him his manuscript and a pot of money."

"But——"

"Then Dix was called away. When he returned, my uncle was dead and the money and the manuscript had vanished. You admit that, don't you?"

"Yes, the manuscript was certainly missing, and Dix said some money was, also. But, like Mike, they may turn up yet."

"Together?"

"How do you mean?"

"The three of them—the money, the manuscript, and Mike. There's no other way out of it. They all departed at the same moment. If they did not, long since Mike would have returned. Now he can't return. He's afraid to."

Impatiently Camille shrugged a shoulder.

"I don't know whether to be angry or amused."

"At what?"

"Why, you're insinuating that he killed his father."

"No, Camille, nothing of the kind. I'm merely submitting certain facts and

asking you and myself what they amount to."

"And I'll tell you—rubbish!"

"Well, let's look at it this way. On the night my uncle died, I was with you in the drawing-room. Mike appeared. Where had he come from?"

"I'm sure I don't know."

"Nor I. But I can imagine. I can imagine that he had a scene with his father, that he tried to force him to make the will in his favor, and, failing, grabbed the money and the manuscript, stuffed them into his grip, and came down to you, not realizing then what had happened, not realizing that he was a parricide, that in the struggle he had throttled his father or otherwise done him to death. The realization of that came later. But, at the time, don't you remember how evil and sinister he looked?"

"I remember nothing of the sort. But if you can imagine all that, why can't you imagine that since he left here, he has lost his memory? People often do, don't they, and turn up as milkmaids or shoemakers somewhere else? Or if that is too much for you, why can't you imagine that it was Shri who did it, provided, that is, that anything was done at all. Personally I prefer to think so."

"It's very morbid of you, then."

"I suppose you'll say that stupidity is preferable. Mike never killed his father; he never took the money; and what would he do with the manuscript? But if you can cook up a cock-and-bull story of that order, you'd far better try your hand on Shri. Why, your uncle kept me in fits of laughter over him. He was as real to him as I was myself."

"My uncle was a fit subject for Bedlam. He——"

"See here, Arthur," Camille interrupted, "I won't have you speak of him in that manner. And in my presence I'll thank you never again to speak as

you have of Mike. Your uncle was an angel to me, and as for Mike, I'd like to know when these amiable suspicions concerning him occurred to you?"

"From the start. The reporters all had them and practically said as much."

"Then hereafter you——"

Camille paused and turned. Through parting portières, Archibald, a tray in his hand, was emerging. On the tray was a card and a letter, which he brought her.

Camille, glancing at the writing on the envelope, cried:

"Why, it's from Mike!"

In the old melodramas, when the villain was foiled, he showed it; it was part of the business. Glendenning showed no emotion whatever, but figuratively his heart sank. His uncle's money had been so neighborly. Now, like Shri—and as suddenly—it had gone.

"What does the dear boy say?" he at last got out.

Camille, who meanwhile had read the letter, handed it to him and looked at Archibald.

"Is any one waiting?"

"A gentleman, mem."

"Show him in."

Hotel St. Francis, San Francisco,
10th November.

DEAR CAMILLE: Some day or other, this will be brought to you by my friend, Victor Revell. Smile on him for my sake and for his own. He is worth it.

God bless you.

MIKE.

At a glance, Glendenning took it in and, for further examination, he pocketed it.

Camille did not notice. She was greeting a man whom from that instant Glendenning hated, hated instinctively, hated intensely, hated without knowing why; which is the surest reason any one can have for hating anybody.

"Mr. Revell?" Camille, a hand outstretched, was saying.

She had got up. Glendenning, too, had risen.

Revell took the hand, released it, nodded at Glendenning, whom Camille then introduced, smiled into her eyes, and answered her.

"Yes, and I fervently hope that my name may not be one of ill omen."

"He is too good looking," thought Camille, taken at once with his appearance, which was radiant, virile, and noble.

Seating herself and indicating a chair, she asked:

"And are you just here from San Francisco?"

"Practically," Revell, seating himself also, replied. "It was a little while, though, before I could get your address. Doctor Dix, to whom Mike also gave me a line, told it to me. Mike could not have known where you were."

"Yes?" Glendenning, who had remained standing, got in. "How is the dear boy?"

Revell looked up at him and from him to Camille.

"I am sorry to bring you bad news." He paused, half raised a hand, and added: "It was pneumonia."

At that, Glendenning sat down, flopped, rather. If he had been alone, he would have danced and shouted. As it was, he closed his eyes. It was all too blissful. The estate was his.

With a look in which there was pain, amazement, and uncertainty, Camille exclaimed:

"He is dead?"

Sympathetically Revell considered the girl.

"That depends on how you look at it. From what he told me of his father's views, it may be that there is no such thing as death. It may be that death is but a garage at which you wait a while until, in exchange for your demolished motor, destiny supplies you with a fresh one."

"What an ass!" thought Glendenning.

But he said:

"Were you with poor Mike when—er—"

"Yes, I and a physician who certified accordingly. Towers his name is. I gave his address to Doctor Dix and also some papers that Mike wanted to go to him."

Glendenning twisted. Into the core of his being the reply cut like a knife. Before him the inhuman possibility surged that Mike had made a will. He blurred it.

"Papers? What were they?"

With entire civility, Revell answered:

"Papers concerning Doctor Dix, I suppose."

He turned again to Camille, who in the interval had gone to the window and was looking from it, but not at the moon nor yet at the river. She could not see them; her eyes were too blurred. Revell got up and joined her.

Glendenning, considering them both, also got up, passed through the portières, closed the door, and went to the vestibule, where presently he was talking to Dix over the wire.

"This is Glendenning. I'm speaking from Miss Marcy's apartment. A Mr. Revell who is here has just told us about poor Mike. Camille and I are very much cut up over it. Now this Mr. Revell says he left some papers with you. In Camille's behalf, will you tell me whether they concern her?"

Clearly the answer came:

"Not in the least."

"Well, you can appreciate that she is deeply interested. If there is no objection, will you tell me what they are?"

"No objection at all. One is a death certificate; the other a will of which I am appointed executor."

Glendenning's throat went dry and he coughed.

"What is its tenor?"

"Everything to Revell."

"What?"

"Everything Mike possessed he left absolutely to Victor Revell."

Ragingly Glendenning clutched at the instrument.

"I'll contest it!" he thought.

But he said:

"May I run in and look at it?"

For a second the answer delayed. Then it came:

"Yes, but it won't do you a bit of good."

"I'll come, all the same," said Glendenning, who swore, grabbed at his hat, and started.

CHAPTER IV.

From mingling faces; from forms and features that appeared, disappeared, reappeared; from these and from tumults of farewells, Camille awoke.

Through the open window, she could see the sky, an unprecised gray that hesitantly would become blue, bluer, still bluer. As yet it was gray. It must be very early, she thought. Then at once she remembered. Mike was dead.

The fact stood out and hurt her. Over it, the night before, she had cried a little. Now again her eyes were wet.

During his mysterious absence, she had missed him, though not poignantly nor yet impatiently, for she had felt that he must return. Now he never could, and when he had been with her, she had treated him like a dog that is overattentive and therefore in the way. She wished that she had been less hard with him. His appearance had been distressing, but custom had so familiarized her with it that she had accepted it, as one may get to accept a rhinoceros in the back yard, provided the brute is there long enough.

She dried her eyes and, in a sort of retrograde vision, reviewed the incidents of the night before—Glendenning's effort to show that if Mike were not a criminal, he would have returned;

then the news of his death, the eclipse of Glendenning, and the brief after-while, during which she had learned from Revell what little there was to know.

That little, now that she reviewed it, seemed, like the sky, unprecised. Like the sky, there were voids in it, great stretches of nothing over which silence was spread. But then, in ten minutes, who can be exhaustive? And had there been as many as ten? Five, perhaps; six at most. Yet, during them, she had realized that, in addition to the appearance of this man, who looked as if he had stepped from a canvas signed "Murillo"—some canvas that pictured a young grandee—she realized that, in addition to this, which in itself is surely a lot, she liked the man himself. With the stranger, she had felt at home. This man, whom she had never seen before, had made her want to see him again. It was very extraordinary.

Love at first sight always is. Of the presence of that psychosis she was unaware. If she had been and had been cross-questioned regarding it, she certainly would not have blushed herself to death, but quite as certainly she would have lied. She had no Victorian ideals, but she knew what is nice and what is not and that, perhaps, is better.

Meanwhile, the sky had deepened. Through the window came the radiance of the April day. Later, when, in breeches and boots, she had breakfasted and was about to go for a run, Glendenning was announced.

Camille made a face. But, accepting the situation, she went into the drawing-room where he stood, and where, for a superior young man, he looked very ugly.

"See here, Camille," he at once threw at her. "Did that chap tell you how he did for Mike?"

Camille flicked with her crop at her boots.

"What chap?"

"Don't beat about the bush. You know perfectly well that I mean Revell."

"Oh," said Camille slowly. "Mr. Revell, is it? Well, no, he didn't say anything at all about himself—which is more than I can say for some people."

Glendenning caught it and tossed it back.

"Some people, at least, are honest."

Camille twirled her crop.

"Last night Mike was an outlaw. Now I suppose Mr. Revell is a cut-throat. Why, what is the matter with you, Arthur?"

Glendenning snorted.

"Matter? Matter enough! The matter is that we have got to fight him. He told you, didn't he?"

"About fighting him? Certainly not, and if he had, I should have understood as little as I understand you."

"What I mean is, didn't he tell you about Mike's will?"

"Not a word. Why should he?"

"Because Mike has left him everything. Everything, do you hear that? He has left him property that he had no right to leave him, property that my uncle intended for you. But he was blackmailed into doing it. That is the size of it."

In the little tempest of words, Camille sat down. It was certainly very queer, she thought, and she said so.

"Queer?" Glendenning chokingly repeated. "Queer is not the word for it. It's undue influence—felony, for all we know, State's prison——"

Camille laughed. She could not help it.

"Why not the chair? But nobody ever intended to leave the money to you. What are you so hot about?"

"What?" In righteous indignation, Glendenning lifted his arms. "You ask me that? Can't you see that it is on your account? Do you suppose I shall stand by and see you bunkoed? Not

a bit of it! I'll have the will set aside!"

"Yes?" said the girl with a treacherously innocent air. "And what would happen then?"

"We would share and share alike. I'd give you half."

Camille cocked an eye.

"Give me?"

"Well, you see, as next of kin, it would have to pass through my hands."

Then, at sight of the mocking eye, he extracted and flourished a handkerchief.

"But," he resumed, "it would all be in the family. When we are married——"

"When we are!" Camille interrupted. "I have no intention of marrying you, not the faintest. And do stop waving that flag at me! I'm not a submarine. And how do you make out that Mike was blackmailed, as you call it?"

"Well, isn't it obvious? Why, a schoolboy could reconstruct the whole thing! There was poor Mike, a stranger in a strange land. He was probably ill, in any event lonely, and certainly conscience-stricken. Then this Revell happened along, pretended to be hail-fellow-well-met, wormed himself into Mike's confidence, plied him with drink, got him in his cups, wheedled out of him what happened the night his father died, and then threatened to expose him unless he left him everything. It's as clear as day. I've seen the will. Dix showed it to me. It was executed in November in San Francisco and——"

"But Mike could have made another, couldn't he?"

"Certainly he could, and how do we know that he did not? Even otherwise, what was Revell to him? What was he, anyway, in comparison to you or to me?"

"Oh, come now! You know per-

fectly well that Mike hated you and that you hated him."

Glendenning waved it away.

"I wouldn't go as far as that. Mike was after you and so was I. There was just the spirit of decent rivalry between us. But that's neither here nor there. The point is that we've got to have the will set aside. We've got to contest it. We——"

"For Heaven's sake! Do stop saying 'oui' all the time! Any one would think you were a Frenchman."

"I don't understand," said Glendenning, who had got the jest and did not like it.

Camille sprang up.

"Nor I. If it's not French that you're talking, it's lunacy. I don't believe a word of what you told me of Mike or a thing of what you say of Mr. Revell. Not one! What's more, I won't listen to another. You can see me down if you like. I'm off for a run."

Glendenning could only comply. He saw her down; saw her hop on her horse; saw her start and trot away.

Immediately he decided on a run of his own, and presently, in the neighboring subway, he was being whirled down to the offices of his counsel, Tatum.

Mr. Tatum was a large, fierce man who looked like a chucker-out, but whose voice—which was that of a prima donna—contrasted almost tragically with the aggressiveness of his appearance.

"And so," he purred, when Glendenning had summarized the matter, "you want to fight. That is the proper spirit. But we have no evidence. We have only suppositions. What your cousin may have done or omitted to do on the night of which you tell me is now immaterial. But that his beneficiary unduly influenced him we will have to show. Meanwhile, through my San Francisco correspondents, I can make

an inquiry or two. Should these lead to anything, it may be worth while to proceed, if only with a view to a possible compromise, unless in the interim the will should prove voidable *per se*. As soon as it is entered, I will consider that point. But otherwise——"

Tatum paused, looked at the walls wainscoted with yellow-backed books, looked beyond them at an idea that beckoned, nodded at it, and looked again at Glendenning.

"Have you anything in your cousin's handwriting?"

"Yes, there's that letter from him that Revell brought last night to Miss Marcy."

"Have you anything else?"

"Well, I wrote him once asking him to advance me some money, and he answered very brutally that he would not."

"Very good. Send both to me. It will be interesting to compare them—to compare them, also, with the signature on the will. That, too, may lead to something. But otherwise we shall need evidence."

"And we'll get it," Glendenning assured him.

And they did. But the evidence they landed was quite different from what they had expected. It belonged to quite another kettle of fish.

CHAPTER V.

Camille rode up the river and raced back. The day before, she had done the same. The day before, the run had brought her the animal joy of living. But on this morning, the wind, the light, the breath of spring, the smell of lilacs, the fiery little cob, the eager glitter of the sky—these things flushed her, reddened her lips, brightened her eyes, poured claret into the cream of her skin, powdered her face with dust, wilted her collar, made her hot and dirty, but not happy. The death of

Mike oppressed her, and on that oppression had been superimposed Glendenning's utter obnoxiousness. The manner in which he had spoken of Revell had angered her, and in spite of the run, the memory of it rankled. None the less, as she told herself, it was queer about the will.

At the curb, a groom bobbed at her. She hopped off, patted the cob's wet nose, looked into his great and empty eyes, fed sugar into his dripping and ready mouth, flew in, flew up, tubbed, changed, and wished that she were a man and could hit out and swear.

But now Margaret, a maid, pale and plain, looked in with an announcement and a query. Luncheon was served, and would she see Mr. Revell?

Would she? Well, yes, since he was there, she supposed so, and she looked in the glass, dabbed her face with cologne, patted her hair, patted her frock, wondered what he wanted, and went on and into the drawing-room.

Revell was seated. As she entered, he got up and she thought him even better looking than he had appeared on the previous evening. But at the moment, she got, too, another impression, and she out with it.

"I've seen you before. Where?"

Revell, with a movement of the hand, just sketched a gesture.

"In the street, perhaps. In the theater. I used to live here."

Camille shook her docked hair.

"Yes, I know. I've heard Mike speak of you. But could it have been in Europe?"

"Perhaps. But isn't it rather unimportant?"

"I don't know. Mike's father used to say that nothing is unimportant—or was it that everything is? There! I've got it. I remember now. In the Louvre! Yes, the portrait of—I've forgotten whom. But I remember the picture distinctly—a man dressed for a fancy ball. You're not dressed that

way, but you look just like him. Now will you have luncheon with me? In fact, you'll have to. I hear you are head of the house, such as it is, and I'm prepared to treat you with the greatest respect."

"But, you see, I don't want to be treated with respect, and moreover —"

"And moreover luncheon is served. Will you come?"

She led the way. In the adjoining room, stood Archibald, at whom she motioned.

"A chair for Mr. Revell. Claret for Mr. Revell. The best there is for Mr. Revell, and all there is of it."

"Yes, mem. Yes, mem," Archibald got in, pottering about, pottering away.

"And moreover," the young man resumed, when the old man had gone, "I am not the head of the house. I'm not even the foot of it. I'm not in it at all. But if, technically and for the moment, I seem to have a shadow of a claim——"

"Let me give you some of this," Camille interrupted.

"Thank you. If I have anything of the kind," Revell continued, "that's just the reason why I am here. I——"

"And let me give you some of this, also," Camille again interrupted.

"Thank you. If I have any sort of a claim, I'm here to resign it."

"Eh?" Camille's brilliant eyes were on him.

"Only, in coming, I did not expect ——"

"That I would know about Mike's will already."

"Precisely."

Camille nodded.

"This morning Mike's cousin, Mr. Glendenning, told me."

"Ah!" Revell, who had been looking at Camille, looked down at his plate, on which was sweetbread and sorrel. At once he looked up. "I take it that he objects. That is only natural.

If Mike had left no will, the money would have gone to him. Rather than that, Mike preferred to leave it to me and, rather than accept it, I resign it to you."

If any one can appear both pleased and indignant, that is the way Camille looked.

"Why, I never heard of such a thing! I couldn't let you!"

Revell smiled at her.

"I knew that would be the first thing you would say, but——"

"I shall say it first, last, and all the time. If you don't like claret, there is some Chablis. Now, I don't want to hear another word about it."

"To return, then, to our Chablis Moutonne," Revell, intent on holding his own, resumed. "Apart from Mike's will, I have no claim or title to the property, which is triply yours. It is yours because it originally belonged to your father; it is yours because Mr. Vulper intended to leave it to you; it is yours because such was Mike's wish."

"But——"

"Yes, I appreciate. You will ask why, in that case, is not the will in your favor? I don't know that I can properly explain it."

"I should think not."

"I mean that I can't explain it without the risk of offending you."

"Oh, I am not the kaiser."

"Well, then, if I did not offend you, I might offend others."

"And I am not a repeater, either."

"Here it is, then. Mike felt that if he left the money to you, Glendenning might contest it."

"But can't he anyway?"

"Certainly he can. Moreover, he probably will. But, apart from that, Mike felt that even if his cousin did not contest a will made in your favor, he would so badger you about it that you might end by giving the money to him."

"How well Mike knew me!"

"Yes, and probably much better than he knew this cousin of his, in whom, no doubt, he was greatly mistaken."

"Not a bit of it," thought Camille.

But she said:

"You are not eating anything."

Revell took a mouthful of sorrel and added:

"You can see, then, how it is. Pending the settlement of the estate, the court practically holds it in trust for you. But once the funds are turned over to me, I shall pay them in for you at your bankers."

Camille straightened.

"I'll tell them not to take it."

"The bankers who won't take money do not exist."

Camille frowned.

"I'll refuse to touch it."

"Then it will accumulate interest for you until you change your mind."

"But you're bullying me! Suppose I never change my mind?"

"Then you're not a woman. But assuming that you are as consistent as all that, the property will go to your heirs."

Camille bridled.

"I haven't any—I never shall have any."

"Then it will go to the State."

Camille nodded.

"There, you see! You had far better keep it yourself."

At that Revell laughed, and the laugh and the look that accompanied it annoyed the girl, who exclaimed:

"Are you very rich?"

Then he, too, nodded.

"Enormously."

"What?" she exclaimed again.

"I am one of the richest men in the world," Revell calmly replied and as calmly enumerated the rent rolls of his vast estate. "I have health, strength, youth, and a total absence of needs."

"And extraordinary good looks," thought Camille.

But she said:

"Mr. Rockefeller might envy you."

Revell bowed.

"Whereas I am immodest enough not to envy any one."

"He's a dear," thought Camille.

But she said:

"I don't wonder you want to throw money out of the window. It must be great fun. But it's a game that two can play at. If you pay money in at my bank, I will pay it back at yours."

"You'll have a hard time finding it, Miss Marcy."

"Why? Where is it?"

"Everywhere and nowhere."

"That sounds spacious. What is its name?"

"The Bank of Hope."

"Now isn't he a duck?" thought Camille.

But she said:

"I see. You have ambitions."

"Only one, but that is immense."

Camille stood up.

"Is it a secret?"

Revell also stood up.

"Can you keep one?"

"Yes, yes."

"So can I."

"Why, isn't he mean?" thought Camille.

But she said:

"You haven't eaten a thing."

As she spoke, she passed into the drawing-room. Revell followed and took her hand.

"I've never had a better luncheon."

Releasing her hand, he asked: "May I come again?"

Promptly Camille dropped a curtsy.

"Señor Don Hidalgo, this house is yours."

When, from the hall without, she had heard the door close, she went to the window, saw him as he reached the street, watched him as he moved away.

When he had rounded the corner, she sat at the piano, attacked a score of Borodine, abandoned him for

Granados, and, in allusion no doubt to the latter, stayed her hands and, said aloud:

"I never dreamed that any one could be so nice."

As she spoke, she was conscious of some one entering the room and, turning, she saw Glendenning. The intrusion annoyed her, but of that she gave no sign.

Glendenning was less circumspect. Angrily he considered her.

"So you've been having that man to luncheon, have you?"

She stood up.

"Really, Arthur, when you address me, I'll thank you to adopt another tone."

"But, my dear Camille, when Archibald told me, I could hardly believe my ears. This morning I showed the fellow up to you for the confidence man that he is, and my back is hardly turned before you are wining and dining him."

"It seems to me that it is you who are doing the whining. And, anyway, you are entirely mistaken. Mr. Revell is a very rich man."

"What?"

"And you can attack Mike's will all you like. But it will be me, not Mr. Revell, whom you are attacking."

Glendenning stood on one foot, then on the other.

"How? Why? What?"

"Yes. Mr. Revell proposes to turn the money over to me."

At that, Glendenning threw up his arms and dropped into a chair.

Camille nodded at him.

"Any one would think I had shot you. But don't die just yet. I need not say that I can't accept it."

"But—"

"There you are."

In the surprise of it, Glendenning felt as if a blanket had been thrown over him; not a wet blanket or even an ordinary one, but the Oriental variety,

silken, soft, smothersome. He struggled free.

"Yes, you're right. I am there. It's a plant. I'll wager that he's not a rich man at all. Though, to be sure, he looks like a lead in a movie. But no one would suppose that he could pull it over you like that. Can't you see that, in offering to give you the estate, his only object is to hoodwink us into standing aside, while he laughs and pockets it? No, none of that! I'll have a deed drawn conveying all his interest under Mike's will to you. Then you ask him to sign it. Then you'll see."

Camille shrugged a shoulder.

"Perhaps you didn't hear me. I told him, as I told you, that I could not and would not accept it."

"And you'll never get the chance—unless it comes to you through me. What are you laughing at?"

"At you. What else? Mr. Revell said he was sure Mike must have misjudged you."

Like a beast of prey, the exasperated Glendenning snarled:

"Yes, confound him! He's one of the devils who speak well of everybody. The Judas!"

Camille bubbled,

"That, I suppose, is a *jeu d'esprit*. I might like some more, but I haven't the time."

Raveningly Glendenning jumped up.

"And that, I suppose, is a hint. Very good, I'll go—but I will return."

"Not as you did just now," thought Camille, who, when he had gone, rang for the servant.

"Archibald," she told him, "I shall be sorry to lose you. But I don't wish to have Mr. Glendenning or any one else marching in here before you inquire whether or not I am at home. And I don't wish Mr. Glendenning or any one else to be told who has or has not been here."

"Beg pardon, mem, but Mr. Glendenning, he asked——"

"That will do, Archibald. You heard what I said."

Camille went back to the piano. There, like a vision in a photo play, mentally, before her, stood Revell.

CHAPTER VI.

Tatum, a fortnight later, looked up at Glendenning and in his mayonnaise voice inquired:

"Do you play golf?"

Glendenning, who had just entered the office, sat down.

"No, I loathe the stupid game."

Tatum caressed his aggressive jaw.

"It's fortunate that stupidity does not hurt. If it did, yelling would be continuous and New York is noisy enough already."

Glendenning twisted.

"I thought you wanted to see me."

"Yes," Tatum replied, "and it's just for that reason that I asked if you play golf. We seem to have run into a bunker."

As the ogre purred, he took up a letter, glanced at it, put it down, and purred anew.

"My San Francisco correspondents write that your cousin registered at the Hotel St. Francis the evening of the ninth November, which is just five days after he left his father's house. My correspondents say that the next morning he asked for a reputable attorney and was directed to the firm that attend to the hotel's law business. According to my correspondents, he applied to this firm to have his will drawn, stating that he was in a hurry and wanted it at once. The will was then drawn for him; after which, he copied it out in his own hand, had his signature witnessed, settled with the firm, returned to the St. Francis, paid his bill, took his grip, and—good-by."

Tatum looked again at the letter, re-

freshed his memory with it, and lit a cigar.

"Months later, or, to be exact, on the twenty-eighth of March, at four o'clock in the morning, he turned up at the Morrow House, where, on the following day, he died."

Tatum wreathed himself in smoke and added:

"And that is the bunker that we are up to."

Glendenning swore.

"Your correspondents say nothing else?"

"Plenty," Tatum trilled. "They enter into all manner of irrelevant details. It appears that when Mike turned up at the Morrow House, he was accompanied by a man who paid his lodging in advance, saw him up to the room assigned, came down, and went away, but not until he had summoned a physician for your cousin, who badly needed one. The physician, Doctor Towers, diagnosed the case as pneumonia, to which alcoholism, complicated with exposure, had been contributory. Your cousin then was dying. What is it, Freddie?"

A clerk entered. Apparently young, he was quite bald.

"It's Jerolomon about the St. Chrysostom Church matter——"

Tatum puffed and murmured:

"Ask him to come again. Say that I am closeted with the cardinal now."

When the clerk had gone, Tatum, in his prima-donna voice, asked:

"Where was I? Oh, yes! At noon, a man appeared who presumably was the man of the night before. In any event, he represented himself as a friend of your cousin's, agreed to pay, and did pay, all the expenses, and later had the body removed to the morgue of a crematorium, where it was afterward incinerated. Meanwhile, your cousin's identity had been properly established. Among his effects, was a passport on which was his photograph,

or, at all events, a photograph; and that, together with his few other effects, this friend of his removed."

Tatum again took up the letter, put it down once more, glared, and in his opera voice resumed:

"If I were younger, I would run out there. I hear that Frisco is a delightful place. But I hear also that the food en route is the reverse. Besides, there is the coming back. No, I couldn't do it. But you might."

For a moment, Glendenning considered it.

"I would if I thought I could nail that scoundrel."

"Well," Tatum affectionately replied, "if you conclude to, you'd best not put up at the Morrow House. It is not, I hear, a place for a gentleman. And that reminds me. What could have induced your cousin to go there? Why did he not go back to the St. Francis? Of course there is no law in the matter. He was free to do as he liked—free to drink, free also to expose himself. When it rains in San Francisco, I hear that it is something to boast about. Your cousin appears to have been subjected to it. He appears, also, to have grown a beard. There is no law against that, either. But perhaps that is the reason why he did not return to the St. Francis. Perhaps he feared that he would not be recognized. Doctor Towers told my correspondents that he looked like a tramp. For the heir to a fortune, that is interesting, but not exceptional. In England, before the war, I saw a man who looked like a poacher and who turned out to be a duke."

"What do your people say about this Doctor Towers?" Glendenning, biting a finger, moodily got in.

"Old established family practitioner with a thoroughly good reputation. Which also reminds me. This friend of your cousin's in his last moments has no reputation at all. He has not

even a doubtful past, though it's probably better to have a doubtful past than a past about which there is no doubt whatever. But this deathbed friend has nothing of the kind. Who is he?"

"Revell," Glendenning sullenly replied.

"Precisely. And who is Revell? In San Francisco no one ever heard of him. Your cousin—yes. Your cousin stopped at hotels; he wrote letters; he visited lawyers. But of Revell there is not a trace, not one. Who is this man who seems to have sprung from nowhere and who owns the earth?"

"My cousin's murderer."

Airily Tatum waved it away.

"No, not that. The man in the Morrow House died of a perfectly defined disease, of which the predisposing causes were sufficiently indicated. The man in the Morrow House died a natural death. But your cousin did not. Or, at least, so far as we are yet aware. So far as we are yet aware, your cousin may enjoy the same good health that you do."

Glendenning started.

"Then who was the man in the Morrow House?"

"It is to find out that that I spoke of going there. But, apart from the mysteries of the dining car, the crematorium tells no tales."

"Then we're dished."

"No, not that, either. On the face of it, a Mike Vulper died at the Morrow House. But before the will is probated, it has got to be shown to my satisfaction that that Mike Vulper was your Mike Vulper. And even should that be proven, it must be proven, also, that it was your Mike Vulper, who, in the offices of the San Francisco attorneys, executed this will."

Glendenning groped, but he could not get it.

"You think——"

Tatum sat back.

"I don't know what to think. When you first spoke of Revell, you said that he looked like a mummer. He may be one. In which case, he could certainly make himself up and pass for your cousin to people who would have no suspicions about him and who might at most be expected to vaguely describe him long after."

"That's it. That's it."

Tatum gestured and scowled.

It may be. For, as you may remember, when the will was drawn, he copied it. Why did he? Such a proceeding was absolutely unnecessary and becomes all the more curious when you consider that he was in a hurry. Why, then, did he? The answer is obvious. He did it for no other reason than because he felt that his identity might be questioned and, possessing, in addition to other talents, the ability to imitate another's writing, he wrote it in Mike's hand, on which he had previously practiced."

Savorously Glendenning gulped.

"Bravo! We've got him! The will is a forgery."

"Yes," Tatum purred at him, "that is the way I look at it. But even if we can prove that, as perhaps we may, then, before we can claim the property, we've got to prove also that your cousin is dead."

"If he's not dead, where is he?"

"Ask Revell."

"By the Lord Harry, I will!"

"He knows, but he won't tell you. He knows why the man in the offices of the San Francisco attorneys was in a hurry. He won't tell that, either. He knows and he won't tell why the body of the man in the Morrow House was burned. But I can tell. It was to cover his tracks."

Glendenning's face darkened.

"Then he's got us again."

Tatum laughed fatly.

"I don't think so. If, as is possible—and probable—we can show that the

will is a forgery, we can accept without question the evidence of your cousin's death. In other words, Mike Vulper died at the Morrow House; he died intestate; and the estate is yours."

"Tatum, that's great!"

"Yes, and my bill is going to be greater," thought the lawyer.

But he said:

"When do you think you will see this impostor?"

Glendenning sprang to his feet.

"To-night, and—confound him!—I know where."

Tatum looked up at him.

"To-night I am going to 'The Ring Around the Rosy' show. Afterward, suppose you meet me at the Tap House. Meanwhile, don't fail to ask Revell where your cousin is. He won't tell you, but——"

"Oh, I'll jolt him all right," answered Glendenning, who was leaving the room.

CHAPTER VII.

That evening, Camille dined alone, or as much alone as a young woman can be who is served by a servant and whose mind is thoroughly occupied. Of Archibald, she was subconsciously aware that, always old, latterly he had seemed to be older. But Revell inhabited her thoughts. Since that high noon when he had lunched with her on a mouthful of sorrel, she had seen him every day. He had sat with her, walked with her, ridden with her, and, where a girl like Camille is concerned, few young men can do that without saying the same thing over and over again.

Revell had omitted even mentioning it. But there are always ways of telling, and Camille knew the state of his mind as well as she knew her own. She knew that she was head over heels in love with this man of whom she knew nothing. Yet, although she lacked the experience to recognize it,

that very fact increased his attractiveness. In the history of love, the most sudden, surprising, and devastating passions have been inspired by people who had mystery for sole asset.

Revell had many another. He was very good looking and equally unassuming. In addition, he was distinctly well bred. He never talked about himself. When questioned, he switched. In spite of which, Camille felt at home with him; felt, as girls who have read Mrs. Besant sometimes do feel, that in anterior, forgotten, and enigmatic lives, they had met and loved before. For precisely as she had become conscious of her own psychosis, she was conscious of his. She knew that he loved her. He had made her feel that he meant the very thing he did not say. For the subtlety of that—and subtle it certainly was—she loved him all the more. But as she would have loved him anyway, it perhaps did not matter.

It mattered, and monumentally, to Glendenning, who, on several occasions, had succeeded in making himself even more obnoxious than usual. There was the defunct Mrs. Grundy, whom he evoked and flung at her. Living as she was, and, as he put it, without the ghost of a chaperon, such goings-on did not do. Besides, what did she know of Revell? Was she even sure that his name was Revell? Et cetera and so forth and so on.

To all of which Camille had turned an angry ear and on each occasion had turned him out. None the less, when there is mud enough, some of it will stick. It affected the girl. It made her realize that, on the subject of the one and only, she was considerably in the dark.

At the moment, she was not only in the dark; she was really alone. Archibald had vanished. A moment more and there he was again and would she see Mr. Revell?

Camille moistened her lips, went into the adjoining room, gave him her hand, and said:

"I was just thinking about you. Sit down and tell me all about yourself. It's perfectly ridiculous. I don't yet know what your middle name is."

Revell, who was looking very fit, smiled as he answered:

"That must be because I haven't any."

But Camille was not to be denied.

"Your middle name can stand for you, then. We've talked about me, or, rather, you have, and that topic is threadbare. We've talked gastronomy, and I've found that you know very little about it. We've talked art, and you've found that I know less. We've talked horses, war, submarines, aeroplanes, the czar, the kaiser, and the weather. Barring horses, I never want to talk of any of them again. I want to talk business. Who are you?"

Revell's smile deepened.

"Didn't somebody put the same question to Plato, and didn't he answer: 'I wish I knew?'"

"Oh, if you're going to bring out your seventeen-inch guns! And, anyway, Plato probably found out. If you have not, I'll help you. Your name is Victor Revell. You are nice, quiet, and gentlemanly. You were Mike's friend, and now you are mine. I like you very much. But I know nothing of you."

"You might not like me so well if you did."

"Why do you say that?"

"Well, as somebody said, the soul of another is a dark place."

Camille shook her head at him.

"I'm sure yours isn't. I feel as if I had always known you. And yet, at the same time, I feel that I don't know you at all."

Revell looked down, then up.

"No one knows another. We seldom know ourselves. How can we? Life is a procession of phenomena, of

which one departs as another appears and of which each, created by what has gone before, creates that which follows, the result being that, though from cradle to grave, a man is called the same, never, either mentally or physically, is he. The man of this instant perishes. He is replaced by a new one during the next."

"Do you think that is a pretty way to talk to a girl?" Camille with an air of severity inquired. "Why don't you tell me something I can't understand. Or if that is difficult, treat me like a fellow of your own size and tell me some of your adventures. Don't you want to smoke, Señor Don Hidalgo?"

Revell lit a cigarette, shifted, and answered:

"Adventures consist more in what we put in them than in what they contain. Of themselves, they are empty. It is our imagination that fills them. The only adventures worth having are those that come not from without, but from within. Take Napoleon. His existence was a dream from which he awoke at St. Helena. It was there only that he really lived."

Camille made a face.

"There you go again! More artillery!"

"Well, then, take Mrs. Druce, take Madame Humbert."

"I'm willing. Where are they?"

"Where they deserve to be—among the immortals. With nothing more ponderable than a belief, perhaps justified, in human stupidity, Madame Humbert had herself recognized as the heiress of a plutocrat who never lived."

"What?"

"Not only that, she evoked vanishing litigants, phantom millions, a grand phantasmagoria that included a safe full of government bonds, a safe in which those bonds were officially attested to be, a safe before which guards patrolled, a safe with which she rooked the world and the ghetto and which

contained precisely one collar button and a penny. Where are the great prestidigitators after that? Where are Poe, Collins, Gaboriau, and Conan Doyle? Madame Humbert invented the most picturesque fairy tale of the age. It is true she had to cut and run for it, but genius is seldom appreciated."

Camille made another face.

"I don't like that story."

Revell got up, put his cigarette in an ash receiver, nodded at the girl, and sat down.

"Then you may prefer the Druce poem. Considered as pure poetry, the Tichborne case is drivell beside it. In the latter, an Australian butcher caused an English gentlewoman to recognize him as her son. In the Druce case, the daughter-in-law of a London tradesman recognized a dead duke as the grandfather of her child. She did not stop there, either, though, unlike Madame Humbert, she did not have to run for it. Besides, what is a wicked woman who takes to flight by comparison with a wickeder duke who takes to trade? For that is what this lady claimed he did. She claimed that the Duke of Portland, after murdering his brother, transformed himself into a furniture dealer, had himself die and be buried, and, reappearing, frightened his shop folk into fits. Madame Humbert had a safe in which there was a new penny. Mrs. Druce had a coffin in which there was old iron. But both had imagination. Both understood intensive living. Together, they added to the gayety of nations and, incidentally, to mine."

Camille moved uneasily.

"Perhaps you have intensive adventures of your own to relate."

Revell covered her with his eyes.

"Not yet."

"You mean that you'll tell them later?"

"If I ever go to jail."

The room was warm, but Camille shivered.

"That's rather a gruesome possibility, isn't it?"

"Inspirational, I should call it. When Bunyan was under lock and key, he enjoyed every kind of temptation and every variety of danger, with no other inconvenience than that of putting them all down in black and white. He was not a prisoner; he was a pilgrim. When Cervantes was jailed, the walls parted, and through them cavalcaded Sancho Panza, Don Quixote, and that great lady whose name is Fame. From a prison at Mons, Paul Verlaine issued with a sheaf of verse that carried him to Parnassus, carried him to the top. That's the life! Life behind the bars!"

"Don't!" she cried at him.

With real concern, he considered her.

"But I am only jesting."

Camille shrank.

"Then your jests are horrible! You frighten me with them. I can't bear to have you praise cheats and prisons. Particularly as——"

"As what?" he asked, for visibly she hesitated.

"I can't tell you. Yes, I will! I will tell you! Ever since you got here, Arthur Glendenning has said—— No, I can't say it."

But Revell helped her.

"That I am an impostor? Isn't that it?"

"Yes," the girl slowly got out. "But I don't and won't believe it."

Revell moved over to where she sat.

"Camille, you know I love you."

She looked up at him.

"And I love you. I love you absolutely."

"Then trust me."

"There's something that you don't want me to know?"

"Yes. For the present."

"And when I do know it?"

"You shall be judge and jury."

"But you are Victor Revell?"

"In flesh and blood."

"And Mike was your friend?"

"That I can swear to."

"And you've done nothing that you wouldn't wish me to know?"

For a second, before him passed a flying picture torn from the long cinematograph of time. A second only and he answered at once:

"Nothing whatever."

"Then you need tell me nothing else, except——"

She hesitated and he repeated it:

"Except?"

"Except that you love me."

He moved closer.

"I don't need to tell you. You know it."

"A girl likes to be told," she smiled and replied. But the smile faded and she added: "Only I do wish that mysteries had not been made out of molehills. They give me the creeps."

"You mean about Mike? But Mike is not a molehill. Though your Mr. Glendenning probably thinks I put him in one."

"I don't!" Camille hotly protested. "I never have! I never could!"

Revell laughed.

"But he does, and that is a trait of real genius. For it, he deserves a niche between Madame Humbert and Mrs. Druce."

Camille turned from him. The portières were parting. Through them Archibald appeared.

"Mr. Mike, mem, and will you see him?"

CHAPTER VIII.

At the announcement, a whirlwind tossed her thoughts. Into them entered stretches of night. From Archibald, she turned to Revell. He had moved away. With an air of amused wonder, he was considering the servant. If, through the portières, a giraffe

had peered and spoken, he could not have seemed more pleasantly surprised.

Camille, turning again to the servant, agonizedly repeated:

"Mr. Mike?"

Archibald blinked.

"Mr. Mike, mem? I meant Mr. Glendenning."

Camille, who had gasped and half risen, sighed and sank back and, not in relief, but in the abeyance of the shock, motioned that he was to come in.

Then, in a moment, as Glendenning appeared, affably Revell nodded.

"We were just talking about you."

Icily Glendenning surveyed them both.

"You must have been very idle."

"I could have screamed," said Camille. "Did you hear Archibald announce you as Mike?"

Glendenning sat down.

"He's crazy. Since my uncle died, he has not been the same at all."

Camille, who had got her breath, replied:

"Mr. Revell says that no one is ever the same, that life is—I've forgotten what, but that you are here one minute and gone the next."

Glendenning looked over at Revell.

"You must have been referring to Mike. Personally, I would give a red pippin—I would give two of them—to know where he did go."

Revell, who was standing with his back to the mantel, smiled pleasantly, but exasperatingly.

"If I can tell you anything, command me."

Glendenning glared.

"You carry modesty to excess. Since he left here, no one knows anything at all about him but you."

"Oh, I assure you, there are others in plenty. The people at the Morrow House, and more at the White River, good chaps with rough names—Ootona, Keok, Adloot, Iyatunk——"

Camille moistened her lips.

"Who are these dears?"

Revell turned to her.

"I'll introduce them properly. Before Mike left here, he intended to go to France; he had even obtained a passport. Meanwhile, I had written, outlining possibilities with which I was familiar and asking him to join me. He had made money at cards, more in Wall Street—enough, at least, for a while—and he started West. In San Francisco, he learned about his father and made a will—though why in my favor is momentarily unimportant—and went on and up to where I had told him he would find me, but where he contracted pleurisy and where, for medicine, there was only drink. The effect of both was such that I brought him back. When he reached San Francisco, he was dying, and at the Morrow House he died."

To it all Camille listened with an air of such visibly absorbed interest that Glendenning, seeing that in drinking it in she was accepting it wholly, laughed.

"Where did this occur?"

Revell turned to him.

"On and about the White River."

Glendenning grunted.

"I never heard of it."

"No, possibly not. Before the war, you may not have known whether Verdun was in Poland or Peru. The White River is in Alaska. The climate did not agree with Mike, though it did agree with others who knew and liked him there—with, for instance, Iyatunk, Adloot, Keok, and Ootona."

"Confound him!" thought Glendenning, who thought, too: "What evidence could be got out of these savages even if one could get at them?"

But he said:

"I infer that you are a prospector."

"The meanest of us have our little talents," Revell, in his agreeable way, replied. "I was applauding yours only a moment ago."

"You quite turn my head," Glendenning retorted. "But you would clarify it if you can tell me why Mike made his will in your favor."

Camille flushed and motioned:

"Arthur, that is none of your business."

"Forgive me, Camille. I have had to make it my business. Mr. Revell will not misunderstand my attitude, either. Mike knew that rightfully the property was yours. In spite of which, he turns it over to this gentleman, and frankly I don't understand why."

In that same pleasant way, Revell considered him.

"I follow you there. But don't you think that there are mysteries that are better ignored than elucidated?"

It was a moment before Glendenning could unravel the remark, and when he did, he almost whinnied:

"Ha! Yes! If there were no lawyers to do so for us."

"And have they succeeded?" Revell, with an air of eating nougat, inquired.

The thrust, keen and prompt as the point of a sword, pricked before it could be parried. From it Glendenning backed.

"May I ask you a question, Mr. Revell?"

"I am entirely at your service."

Glendenning braced himself and straight at him threw it.

"Then where is Mike now?"

Camille sprang up. She was not red, but she saw it.

"Arthur, I am ashamed of you! Mr. Revell is my guest. I won't permit him to be insulted!"

But Revell, who seemed perplexed, merely, and not insulted in the least, intervened.

"Mr. Glendenning has probably some good reason for asking that."

"I should say so!" Glendenning exclaimed. "And with no reason to conceal it—or anything else—either."

Camille stamped a foot.

"Then what is it?"

Glendenning twisted and fired:

"The fact that the Mike Vulper who died in San Francisco was not Mike at all."

Camille went white. She stared at Revell, who was looking at something that she could not see—a flying picture that showed dawn, drizzling rain, and the feverish and friendless derelict who, accosting him then, had begged for the love of God the price of a night's lodging. A moment only. The picture faded. Revell was looking at Camille, who was staring at him.

From her he turned with a smile to Glendenning.

"You remind me of Hegel. Hegel propounded contradictory propositions. That is what you have done. It is very difficult. Let me applaud you for it."

"He is swamping me with words," thought Glendenning, who fired again:

"The man in the Morrow House was a tramp with a beard."

Pleasantly, but indifferently, Revell nodded.

"There are no barbers on the White River. No tailors, either. Life there has its penalties."

"And its rewards."

"Undoubtedly, and you may share them if you care to go and join my friends there."

"He has an answer for everything," thought Glendenning.

But he said:

"What became of Mike's effects?"

"Together with my own, they went down from an overturned canoe. When we reached civilization, we had only the rags we stood up in. The coat that Mike then wore I still have. In the inside pocket is a tag that reads 'Johnson & Jordan, Fifth——'"

"Avenue," Camille cut in. Relieved and appeased, she had reseated herself. "I went with him there once when he was ordering a suit. He wanted me to select the material."

"May I smoke?" Revell asked.

The girl nodded.

"Yes, and you, too, Arthur, if you want it. Only, for Heaven's sake, let it be the pipe of peace."

But Glendenning was on his feet.

"I'm off. Good night." And he pranced himself out.

Camille turned with a smile to her lover.

"He acted like a wild boar, didn't he?"

Revell approached her.

"No, not wild exactly. I should say that he has lucid intervals in which he is merely tedious."

Then at once they were in each other's arms.

CHAPTER IX.

From Broadway's blazing cereals, glittering corsets, coruscating gums, and fiery cats; from its pandemonium of lights, people, and bellowing motors, Glendenning entered the taproom where he was to meet Tatum.

He looked about, and not seeing his lawyer among the men there who were talking money in thousands, in hundred thousands, talking money noisily and talking nothing else, he seated himself at a table and ordered a whisky and soda.

When, with a pop, it was produced, he swore deeply, tossed it off, lit a cigar, and through the smoke of it turned the matter over, looked at it, as he had on the way down, from this angle, from that, from the other. Yet, however he viewed it, though it had the same fishy smell, the fish itself was invisible. It was there somewhere, but, try as he might, it escaped.

He swore again. Fate, in the shape of Revell, was slowly, but surely, dragging from him the two things that he wanted most in the world—that girl and that money. But hope is forever saying "good morning" to you, and,

the whisky prompting, he told himself that Revell had not got either of them yet—and never would so long as his lungs held out and he could cry, "Stop thief!"

Only, to whom could he cry it? Not to Camille; she would not listen. Not to Revell; he would only laugh. But thank the Lord there still were the courts. Yet there, too, at the moment, he was stumped, for, barring the certainties of his own intuitions, he had not a thing to go on.

For him, those certainties were ample. They screamed at him. They shrieked the loose joints in Revell's armor. They flaunted the fact, undeniable and beyond peradventure, that in the problematic event of Mike's having made a will, it was in Camille's favor that he would have made it. Therefore, he had but to show that the will was a forgery and that impostor would be jailed, the estate would be his, and, in the rebound, Camille also.

From that dream he started. Tatum, with his chucker-out air and prima-donna voice, was addressing him.

"Well, and did you do him?"

At a hovering waiter he murmured, "A high ball." After which, he sat massively down and with a bulldog look listened while Glendenning recited the Alaskan epic.

The tale ended, Tatum drank and wiped his mouth.

"That was a very good show I saw to-night, but Revell must be a better one. Have you a match?"

Glendenning shoved him a box.

"Thanks. Have you a cigar also? Thanks again. As our friend probably knows, no law of God or man runs north of fifty-three. His Alaskan romance is, therefore, admirable. In it is the real artist's surety of touch. It ought to be put to music. Of course, if I had him on the witness stand, I could run a limousine through it. But

I haven't him there and I doubt now that I ever shall."

"Why, to-day you——"

"Yes, I know, and afterward I saw Marvalho. As an expert, he has no superior and but one equal, Bakharoff, who lives in Petrograd, unless he is dead at the front. Marvalho said that the writing in the will and in Mike's letters is identical. He said that I could take it or leave it, but that all three were written by the same man."

Tatum drank again and added:

"It's a great pity."

He meant it, too, but he was thinking of his bill.

"I had quite counted on landing the estate," he continued. "But as this life is ordered, nothing is certain except what has already happened. None the less——"

He paused, beat a brief tattoo on the table, nodded at Glendenning, and resumed.

"None the less, with the least adroitness, we ought still to grab the lion's share. We have only to adopt toward Mike the same fiduciary position that Revell occupies and we will have turned the trick."

Glendenning, who took it for granted that Tatum was drunk, groaned helplessly.

"Yes," Tatum was saying, "it may be, as you once said, that Mike did for his father, and it may also be that Revell knows it. For the moment, however, all that is obscure and immaterial. But for some reason, Mike shuns the light of day. For some reason, he is hiding. For some reason, he covers his tracks, makes a will, and pretends to die, having previously arranged with his beneficiary to share the estate with him. But we can do any sharing as well as Revell, can't we?"

Glendenning covered his mouth with a hand. Tatum, he saw, was not drunk, but was he mad?

"Of course we can," Tatum, answer-

ing his own question, ran on. "Better, even. For Revell would certainly pocket it all; whereas we, as men of honor, would see to it that Mike received—well, a third. Perhaps a trifle less. But we would do the square thing."

"Tatum," Glendenning got out, "what are you driving at?"

"The estate of course. What else? I want my share in it, too. And I'll get it. For Mike did not die in San Francisco and, since he omitted to there, it's even money that he omitted entirely. We have only to find him and——"

"Yes!" the exasperated Glendenning exclaimed. "But where?"

"Why, here in New York. I doubt if he ever left this sordid city."

"But since Marvalho says that the will is in his writing, he must have made it out West."

"Not in the least. He drew it here, signed it here, and shipped it to Revell, who, in affecting to recopy it, flim-flammed the San Francisco lawyers with the original. These lawyers certainly did not reread it. Why should they? They merely had their clerks witness a paper which Revell pretended to sign. Anyway, if Mike was not here then, he is here now. Consequently, all we have to do is to find him, tell him that we will do as well by him as Revell, put on the thumbscrews, and there you are."

Helplessly Glendenning looked into his empty glass. He could not see it and said so.

Tatum took it up.

"Then follow Revell."

"Oh, as for that, I have."

Tatum nodded.

"Good! You are over seven years of age."

Glendenning nodded back.

"At the hotel where he is stopping, he has no visitors, receives no mail, never telephones."

"Pays his bill regularly?"

"And in cash."

"In twenty-dollar bills, perhaps. Where does he go?"

"To the Public Library or else to Miss Marcy's."

"He's a bigger man than I thought."

"In what way?"

"He stands alone—or appears to. What hotel is he stopping at?"

"The St. Jasper."

Tatum beat another brief tattoo.

"There are a lot of rooms in that house."

"What of it?"

"It's a pity we can't go through them all."

"Why?"

"Because Mike is in one of them. Have you a match?"

"There's a box before you, but here's a cigar. How do you get that?"

"Through the process of elimination. If Mike is not dead, he must be somewhere. If he and Revell are in league, they must be in touch. Since Revell has no visitors, receives no mail, does not telephone, and goes nowhere, they are in the same hotel. You told me that Mike was a good mimic, did you not?"

"And a born actor."

"Then he is masquerading there, and probably in the room next to Revell. Anyway, he's at the St. Jasper. Glendenning, I'll stake my reputation on that. Well, yes, since you insist, I'll have another high ball."

Darkly, for a while yet, the two men talked.

CHAPTER X.

"Oh! Miss Marcy——"

At the cry, Camille, who was dressed for a run, stopped and turned.

In the hall, hurrying after her, was her maid, Margaret. As Camille stopped, she stopped also.

"What is it?"

But Margaret, her mouth working, made no reply.

"What is it?" Camille, perplexed at the mummery, impatiently repeated.

"Oh, Miss Marcy, Archibald's on the floor. He——"

Camille hurried by her and on and beyond to the extreme end of the apartment. There, in a little room which she had not seen since she first took the flat, the withered servant lay in a heap, the eyes staring, the face mottled, one corner of the mouth lifted as a dog's when about to bite, and with things wrapped in paper beside him.

Camille looked in and bit her lip. Her tender heart reproached her. Only a little since she had said—and crossly enough—that she would not be sorry to lose him and now she had, or at least she supposed so, but she could not be sure; it might be but a fit of some kind, and she hurried back to the other end of the apartment, where she telephoned and waited until at last Dix appeared.

Telling him what little she could, she sent him in with the maid for guide, and that only because she was young and, to those that are, death, instead of being the normal interruption that it is, always suggests something spectral.

She was still in the hall when Dix returned.

"Cerebral hemorrhage," he told her, and together they entered the drawing-room.

In the physician's hands were two packages, which he put on the piano.

"I can't say I did not expect it," he resumed. "He has been in to see me several times. He had nephritis—and other things."

Camille sighed.

"I am sorry, very. He was queer, but he was faithful."

"It's difficult to be that and not the other," Dix, with frank cynicism, replied. "I'll have an undertaker come and——"

"You say he had things the matter with him?"

"Yes, his conscience was affected. It was that that made him what you describe as queer. For the last few months, he has lived in a panic, and there are few toxins more depressive than fear."

"Why, what on earth had he to be afraid of?"

Dix seated himself on the piano stool.

"What have we, any of us, to be afraid of except danger, damp sheets, and our own misdeeds? There is nothing else."

Camille flicked at her boots.

"Yes, but——"

Dix waved at her.

"An hour before your guardian died, I was with him; so was Archibald. Mr. Vulper was then apparently in his usual poor health. I was called away. When I returned, he was dead. You remember what occurred?"

"Yes, you sent for me. It was very painful."

"I mean in regard to the safe."

"You said that money was missing—money and papers."

Dix indicated the packages.

"There they are. In one of those bundles is ten thousand dollars in twenty-dollar bills. In the other is 'Alpha and Omega'—a manuscript that your guardian intended to leave to the British Museum."

Camille, who had stopped flicking at her boots, sat down. A few minutes before, when, in answer to her call, Dix had come, she had not noticed the packages. Now she supposed that he must have brought them with him, though how and where he had got them she could not imagine.

"Well?"

Dix plucked at his beard.

"As Mike's executor, I have impounded them. They are now part and parcel of the estate."

"But where did they come from?" Camille, in a crescendo of surprise, exclaimed.

Dix glanced at her. Ordinarily he had thought her a bright young woman. At the moment, she seemed unfathomably stupid.

His arm shot out.

"From that room yonder. Where else?"

Camille stared and gasped.

"You mean Archibald's? Then he took them! Then— Why, then it was he who killed Mr. Vulper!"

At the thought of it, she shuddered. The thought that, since then, the man had been with her, under her roof, serving her, throttled, and she gasped again.

"Nothing of the kind," Dix irritably replied. "It was chloral. After I had gone, cardiac paralysis supervened and narcosis resulted. Then Archibald happened in on him, and realizing, not, perhaps, that he was dead, but that he was unconscious, he took the money. And thinking—very innocently—to lay it on that fantastic hallucination, Shri Shankira, took the manuscript also."

Dix removed his eyeglasses. By nature and by profession he was modest, but he could not help saying it:

"I always knew it."

In annoyance, Camille shook her crop.

"Doctor Dix, you should have told me!"

But Dix was not afraid of her.

"Oh, when I say I knew it, I mean I took it for granted. But I had no evidence. Archibald was aware of that. At the same time, he was aware, too, that I suspected him and, though he lacked the courage to own up, it would have been a sheer relief to him if I had said: 'Thou art the man.'"

"Yet always before that he had been honest," Camille wonderingly put in.

"How do you know? Anyway, he had probably never been tempted be-

fore by such a bevy of beautiful bank notes. 'Carry us off,' they cried at him. At that, all the cells of his brain fell asleep, all except one, and that cell, vehemently active, incited him to elope with them. When he did, somnambulism ceased; his entire brain awoke. He knew what he had done. He knew, too, the penalties for it. But it was too late. The theft had been discovered and ever since he has lived in a panic. When jurisprudence is more advanced, it will be recognized that any crime belongs to the domain of mental pathology. But forgive me for mistaking you for a clinic."

"Well, I never!" Camille exclaimed. "And all the time Arthur Glendenning has been saying that it was Mike!"

Dix took the packages and stood up.

"I don't think you need disturb yourself about what he says. By the way, how do you like Revell?"

"Very much," the girl replied, but she flushed as she did so.

Dix, who saw everything, saw that. "Oho! So we are in love, are we?" he thought.

But he said:

"Then I take it that Glendenning does not like him."

Camille, too, got up.

"Like him! The last time he was here—or was it the time before?—he said that Mr. Revell had killed Mike."

"Ah?" Dix indifferently rejoined. "Well, stranger things have happened."

With the packages under his arm, he went on and out and reached his office, where he learned that the reception room was full. Before seeing any of the patients, he telephoned instructions to an undertaker, telephoned more to the Amsterdam Trust Company; after which, one at a time, with businesslike expedition, he bundled his patients off.

When all had gone, the bank messenger arrived. Dix gave him the packages.

"Here is a manuscript that belongs

to the Vulper estate. Here are ten thousand dollars that belong to it, also. You may give me a receipt for both."

Even an expert cannot count ten wads, of fifty bills each, in two minutes. Dix, judging that the messenger might be four or five at it, took down an old copy of a review.

In it was an account of a series of surgical operations performed on a woman who, though the account did not say so, perhaps wanted to be a belle—a vocation for which she had been rather handicapped, for she had had a squat nose, high cheek bones, protruding ears, thick, wide lips, and eyes, like Anne Boleyn's, each of a different color.

According to the account, these pleasantries of nature had been one and all—without a scar—corrected.

The account continued:

"The cartilages were detached from the nasal bones, and the periosteum and tissues separated from them. A small portion of the septum was also removed, and so much of the bridge was then cut that when, toward the median line, both sides were broken with a forceps, they met and formed a perfectly straight Greek nose.

"With the lips, a longitudinal incision was made from the corner of the mouth, a half inch from the vermilion border, and run parallel with the white skin line, the incision being continued to the opposite corner. An oblong piece of the submucous and cellular tissue on each side of the median line was then removed, and, after turning away enough of the membrane, the operation was so conducted that, when the wound and its edges were approximated with fine silk sutures, the margin of the lip could be drawn down and rolled under, thereby acquiring the Cupid's bow.

"With the cheek bones, the mucous membrane in the mouth was divided from the median line to the posterior

border of the supermaxillary; all tissues, together with the periosteum, were separated; and when, with a chisel, enough of the molar bone was removed, a face symmetrically oval resulted.

"With the eyes——"

But now the messenger interrupted.

"I've been over them twice, sir. I make it nine thousand nine hundred and eighty dollars. Will you count them yourself?"

Dix shook his head.

"Make out a receipt accordingly."

That done and the messenger gone, Dix turned again to the story of the happy lot of the lady who wanted to be a belle.

Meanwhile, Camille, aware of the impatient cob and the patient groom and aware, too, that she was no longer in a mood for a run that day, sent Margaret to tell them not to wait. Deciding then that, temporarily at least, she could eat nothing in the apartment, she telephoned to Kate Delafield, arranged to have the girl join her for luncheon at a Fifth Avenue inn, and changed her costume for street dress.

Later, over eggs cooked in potatoes, a mousseline chicken, and poached peaches, the two girls talked as only two girls can talk, until Kate Delafield, remembering an appointment, abandoned Camille, who, in a taxi, sailed up again and on through the Park to Seventy-second Street, where the car turned for the Riverside.

But in a moment Camille screamed, poked at the chauffeur, stopped him, jumped out, and darted down the subway stair. A ticket taker yelled and swore at her. She did not heed him. She did not hear. Intent only on catching up with a man whose face for a second she had seen, the cries of a hundred ticket takers would not have stopped her. Only, as it happened, an express was just pulling out. She had missed him.

"You wasn't leaving me like this, was you, lady?"

She turned. Before her was the chauffeur.

There are explanations that explain nothing. Camille attempted none. Accompanied by the chauffeur, who, on the landing above, winked with unfathomable good-fellowship at the fuming ticket taker, she reentered the taxi and drove to her home, where, as she was paying the man, Glendenning marched up.

"I've had such a start!" she told him. "I thought I saw Mike."

"Where? When?"

"Just now, at the subway entrance."

"Well, you may have. But I hardly think so. He never goes out in the daytime."

Camille moved back.

"What do you mean?"

Glendenning, balancing himself on one foot, replied:

"Revell has him locked up at the St. Jasper."

Indignantly the girl's lip curled.

"Oh, come now! First you had Mike murdering his father. Then you had Mr. Revell murdering Mike. Now he has him in a cage. Well, I believe that as much as I do the rest of it."

"Camille," he snorted, "there are things that you never consider. Who took the money from my uncle's safe? Who—"

"Ask Doctor Dix."

But already, with a gesture of annoyance, she had turned. It was from over her shoulder that she threw those three small and, to Glendenning, entirely enigmatic words.

At once he protested.

"I will come in with you."

Angrily she shook herself. Never again would she allow him or any one else to say a word against Revell, who, from the drawing-room window, was at that moment smiling down on both.

"You need not, then," she threw as

before at Glendenning. "For I won't be at home."

She flew in, flew up, and, finding Revell, flew into his arms.

CHAPTER XI.

"There is something so commercial about a diamond. You never see one without wondering what it is worth. But in the ruby is the secret of beauty. Like the rose, it charms and does nothing."

Camille, listening to Revell's remarks, looked at the stone he had brought her. After the manner of the modern girl that she was, she cared little for jewels. But there are old-fashioned conventions that still persist, and an engagement ring is one of them.

Already she had told him about Archibald, about the money and the manuscript—a little string of episodes that interested him hugely, far more, indeed, than she had imagined they would; and it was after he had absorbed the story that the ring—and the remarks—were produced.

"But though I love you with all my heart," he resumed, "though I loved you from the beginning and shall love you to the end, I cannot decently ask you to marry me until you are informed of certain things."

Camille assumed the look of a martyr.

"Don't! I'm overburdened with information now."

"So am I," Revell answered. "I must share it with you. One night in San Francisco, Mike and I ran into a poor devil who was so ill that he could hardly stand. He said that he was without a friend or relative in the world and begged us, for the love of God, to help him. On the corner was a cheap lodging house where we took him and got him a room in which Mike left his passport. The next day the

man died, and it was the name on the passport that was entered on the death certificate."

Through the window came the light and eagerness of the April sun. But the room seemed suddenly dark. In that darkness Camille, who had been sitting very close to Revell, edged from him. She did not know what to say, nor yet what now to expect. It was a moment, even, before she could speak.

"You say Mike was with you?"

"Certainly he was with me."

"Then what became of him afterward?"

"Nothing in particular. He's very well, though, if that is what you mean."

"But his will, then? A live man can't have his will entered for probate, can he?"

"Now that you mention it, I don't think that any live man ever succeeded in doing so before. But Mike can be very surprising. When he first learned of his father's death and of the suspicions his absence had aroused, his first impulse was to return here. But as I told him, first impulses are to be guarded against. They are almost invariably noble. Then, on reflection, he agreed with me that it would be stupid to run the risk of being arrested for a crime that he had not committed, that he could not disprove, but that inevitably Glendenning would try to fasten on him. And he agreed too, that, meanwhile, it would harm no one if he remained out of sight. Now, though, in view of Archibald, it is all quite different."

Camille, who had been looking down, looked up. The room seemed brighter, the air less charged.

"I told you an awful whopper about it," Revell continued. "But though I lied like a thief, it was for you. Honest men never lie except to those they love. For those they love, a good, straight lie is often a great protection. It preserves them from that vulture

of the mind that worry is. Then, too, agreeable people only say agreeable things, and there is nothing better for the complexion. If, when I first got here, I had told you that Mike was playing possum and that I was just masquerading as his heir, you would have shown me the door—which I admit is very pretty and well worth being shown. But you wouldn't have liked it. Perhaps you don't like it even now."

Camille sighed and shook her docked hair.

"Oh, I suppose I shall when I get used to it. But just now I feel all upside down. Whenever I get mixed up, it gives me a headache. Why is that?"

Revell took her hand.

"In the present case, I suppose because you don't know whether or not you can forgive me."

At that, she put her other hand on his.

"Victor, when a girl loves a man, she can forgive him anything. Only——"

"Only what?"

"Don't give me any more headaches."

"Not if I can help it, though Mike may."

"Oh, that reminds me. I could have sworn I saw him to-day in the street."

"And I can swear you did not," thought Revell, but he only smiled.

"It gave me such a start! Afterward I told Arthur Glendenning, who said that it could not be Mike—that you kept him locked up at the St. Jasper."

"Where the deuce did he get that?" thought Revell.

But he said:

"Glendenning is a very amusing person. He ought to be on a barrel organ with a chain around him."

"Anyway," Camille continued, "Mike might come to see me. Where is he?"

"He's here. He's in town. But

what would be the use of his coming? He said you wouldn't look at him."

"But I always liked him."

"He said he didn't want to be liked. He wanted——"

"I know, and I couldn't. I was waiting for you, Victor! For you!"

"But he will dance at our wedding, if you'll forgive me my lies."

Then, through the brief blue afternoon, they talked. Finally Revell stood up.

"I'll come again to-night, dearest. But meanwhile do you remember anything about a silver coin? Mike told me he gave you one the night he went away."

"Yes, I have it somewhere. Why?"

"Mike told me to get you to run a finger around the edge of it."

Perplexed, and very prettily perplexed, Camille got up.

"He did? What for?"

"In order that you may find what otherwise you might never discover—a spring on which you are to press and say, 'Sesame!' The coin will open like Aladdin's cave—or was it Aladdin's? Anyway, that's what you are to do."

"And then?"

"I'm not supposed to know anything else. But after you've opened the coin, will you telephone?"

"Certainly I will, Victor. But as you're coming this evening, what do you want me to say?"

"That you want me to come."

"But I can tell you that now."

"You see, between now and then, you may change your mind."

"Oh, now I'm all mixed up again! And you promised not to give me another headache!"

"But I was careful not to promise for Mike. This is his doing, not mine."

Then, in a moment, after certain ceremonies, Revell went out and on to the St. Jasper, where two men ominously waited.

CHAPTER XII.

Late that same afternoon, Tatum, sitting back in his office chair, glowered fiercely at the Archibald episode, which Glendenning, who had got it from Dix, was relating. He glowered the fiercer because already he had been assured by the St. Jasper's house detective that there was nobody masquerading there, no mysterious guest.

The tale about Archibald, dumped on top of that, knocked momentarily the props from under. But the fiercer Tatum looked, the more gently he talked, and in his mayonnaise voice he summarized it.

"Well, then, we have got to get at it another way, and this, I'll lay a cooky, is the way of it. Since Mike has no reason to be in hiding and yet can't be found, he is dead, dead as a doornail. In view of which, we can now accept that Alaska romance as truth—some of it at any rate."

Glendenning, pulling at his long nose, whinnied:

"Ha! Revell did for him up there, pitched him overboard, drowned him in that White River."

"Possibly," Tatum cooed, "and very probably. But previously, in San Francisco, two men were planning to go prospecting for gold far up in a land that has its hazards. One of the men—Revell, let us say—mentions the dangers, and with noble disinterestedness offers to make a will in his partner's favor; whereat Mike, not to be outdone, makes one in favor of Revell, who, in return, sandbags him at the first opportunity. After which, unable to show that Mike died a natural death, he is up a tree and stays there until, through sheer luck, he happens on and rechristens a moribund tramp. That's the size of it."

Glendenning kicked a foot out.

"And it fits!"

"Now," Tatum, in his prima-donna

manner, resumed, "we go to this Mr. Revell, you as your uncle's heir and I as your counsel. We get him in a quiet corner and drive those two facts quietly home. Then I say: 'Mr. Revell, we—er—propose to attack the will on the ground that while—er—personally I am convinced that the testator is dead, I know that—er—he did not die in the Morrow House.' First blood. Eh? What?"

"Good for you! Hit him again!"

"I say to him: 'Mr. Revell, the proceedings may be long and costly and in any event will have—er—the widest publicity. In the course of that publicity, it may be discovered just—er—well, just what did happen to my client's unfortunate cousin. Now, Mr. Revell, my client wishes to avoid proceedings, precisely as you, I am sure, wish to escape—er—notoriety. For your own sake, let us spare you that. Moreover, we are not bandits; we are honest men. Deed us two-thirds of your interest under the will and in consideration of that, we, for our part, undertake not to contest it.'"

Glendenning jumped up.

"That's the talk! Let's be at him!"

Tatum consulted his watch.

"He may be going to make a night of it."

"Not he!" Glendenning snorted. "He's one of those devils that sit in their room and read."

Then, in the subway presently, the two men were en route for the St. Jasper, of which the hall, saturated with tobacco and electricity, full of people, of hurrying pages, of parties coming in for dinner, and of guests eying each other hostilely or with indifference, resounded with voices, with the click of the typewriter, and the noise of lifts that ceaselessly rose and descended.

The two men, entering there, asked for Revell and, learning that he was not then in his room, stood about for a while and waited.

Finally Glendenning nudged Tatum. "There he is now."

Through the hall he lounged along and, seeing Glendenning, approached, but without any of the amenities, without even a nod.

Glendenning was more gracious.

"Revell," he began, "this is Mr. Tatum, my counsel."

Revell looked the lawyer up and down.

"Well, what of it?"

The insolence was so marked that it gave Glendenning pause, but suavely, in that voice of his, Tatum took it up.

"Mr. Revell, we would like a little private conversation with——"

Revell cut him short.

"I dare say. But it will have to be public and it will have to be brief."

For a man usually so civil, it was all a bit odd. But toward the world at large and these men in particular, Revell felt waspish. He did not know what, at any moment, the telephone might have to say.

"Mr. Revell," Tatum oleagiously resumed, "it is not a matter that you would wish to have us talk of here."

Revell, extracting a cigarette, lit it and with the same insolent indifference replied:

"You may scream it, for all I care."

For a fierce-looking man, Tatum could smile very archly. That smile he exhibited.

"Mr. Revell, you are—er—in a very awkward predicament."

Revell nodded.

"I should say so! It's always awkward to be held up. What the devil do you want?"

Oilily Tatum rubbed his hands.

"Perhaps we had best adjourn to the café."

Revell blew a ring of smoke.

"I seldom drink, and never with strangers."

"Mr. Revell, believe me, we are your friends."

Revell laughed, but it was not a pleasant laugh.

"Then, to employ an antique jest, you ought to sue your faces for libel."

Archly once more Tatum smiled.

"You may think better of that when I tell you that you are in imminent danger of arrest. Don't you think now that we'd better find a quiet little corner?"

"Less than ever. If you have any charges, call the police."

At that, into it, Glendenning jumped.

"If he does, the charge will be murder!"

Tatum turned to him.

"Tut, tut! Softly does it." He turned to Revell. "My client is a bit brusque. He probably wished to represent that the man who died at the Morrow House was not his cousin."

"Well, what of it?"

"What of it?" Tatum, affecting the profoundest astonishment, exclaimed. "Why, Mr. Revell, if that man was not Mike, where is Mike?" He paused, dropped his voice, and unconcernedly added: "But I don't need to ask—I know."

"What the deuce do you want, then?"

"To save you, as I said, from a very awkward predicament."

"Thanks. I can take care of myself."

"Mr. Revell, you will hardly say that when I, as the representative of this gentleman, my client, oppose the probating of the will of which you are the beneficiary on the ground—Shall I tell you what it is in some quieter place?"

"No. Moreover, I don't care a rap what your grounds are. I don't care a rap whether you contest it or not. But meanwhile I have no intention of being blackmailed."

Glendenning squared himself.

"You shall answer for that."

Revell laughed again.

"See here, Glendenning. Do you believe in miracles? For you ought to, you know. It has taken a procession of them to keep you out of Sing Sing and I dare say that the same is true of your fat friend."

Before either could retort, a page came bawling:

"Mr. Revell! Mr. Revell!"

Revell stopped him.

"Mr. Revell? Wanted at the telephone, sir."

"Ask them to hold it a moment," Revell instructed the lad and turned again to Glendenning. "Now drop your airs. Do you remember the last thing Mike said to you? He said, 'I'll surprise you yet.' Mark my words, he will."

He turned again, lounged down the hall, entered a booth, closed the door. He was in a quiet place at last.

Uncertainly, for a moment, the two men eyed each other. Tatum was the first to speak.

"That fellow has got a card up his sleeve. A card? He has a whole pack of them. Now, what are they? At the same time, he might have been more civil. That mention of miracles was very ungentelemanly."

Glendenning did not immediately reply. When he did, he swore.

"Confound the brute! When he first got here, I felt that I had seen him somewhere and told him so, and what do you suppose he said?"

"What?"

"That he went there now and then."

"Think of that, now! Sh! Here he is."

Meanwhile, over the wire, Revell had been listening to Camille.

"Victor, I found the coin and the spring. It opened like a locket. Victor?"

"Yes?"

"In it was a slip of paper on which Mike had written that the slip was just to establish his identity in case of dispute. Victor?"

"Yes?"

"Mike said that he was going to have his face entirely altered and that Doctor Dix has some *Medical Record* which tells how it is done. Victor?"

"Yes?"

"Oh, Victor, are you you or are you Mike?"

"I don't hear you?" replied Revell, who heard perfectly. "But no matter. Have you changed your mind or shall I come?"

"Come! Come! Whoever you are, I adore you!"

Now, that conversation at an end, Revell lounged along to finish the other, and very fit and fine he looked. And that scorn, that anger, where were they? Actually, he was offering Tatum his hand.

"I'm sorry to have kept you standing here. It was most inhospitable of me. I would have asked you elsewhere, but I was expecting a message. Now, though, if I may advise you, Mr. Tatum, and that gentleman your client, let me suggest that you ask Doctor Dix for a *Medical Record* that he has in his office and that contains an article written by a San Francisco surgeon. The article, if I remember rightly, is entitled 'Facial Sculpturing,' and when you have looked it over, you will perhaps understand what a man of your ability might have grasped long since."

Tatum, glaring his fiercest, gently asked:

"And what is that?"

Revell had been speaking very engagingly, but he had been speaking, too, in a voice other than that which he habitually used, a voice before which Glendenning backed in sheer terror.

"What is it?" he repeated. "To my

regret, I have hardly the time to tell you. But summarily the article is to the effect that a man—for the sake, let us say, of winning a girl—may have his appearance so altered that the girl will not recognize him—or, for that matter, his own cousin, either."

Glendenning, clutching at Tatum for support, spluttered feverishly:

"You don't mean that you're Mike?"

The impostor, smiling cruelly at him, smiled also at the lawyer.

"Take him home, Mr. Tatum. The dear boy never was strong—particularly in the upper story."

The effect of that was as abrupt as it was blighting. Tatum and Glendenning fell, open-mouthed, apart, fell literally to pieces. For a second, Glendenning, his jaw working, his eyes bulging, stared and swayed. Then, drunkenly, he staggered to the door.

But Tatum, who, with a mighty effort, was recovering, stood his ground.

"Mr. Vulper, just that I may preserve your respect, let me assure you that from the start I suspected it. If now, or later, I can be of use, my address is——"

Mike laughed.

"I don't expect to die just yet, but, when I do, I may ask you to draw another will. It will be simple enough. Everything to my wife."

On Tatum's fierce face that arch smile feebly showed itself.

"Oh! You are married, then! I——"

"Not yet," Mike, making for the lift, replied. "But I shall be to-morrow. Good night."

"Good night," murmured Tatum, who, at the door, put that last straw on the broken Glendenning.



Art Is Long

By Fannie Heaslip Lea

Author of "The Jaconetta Stories,"
"Chloe Malone," etc.



THE *Nippon Maru* swung into harbor at half after six of a windy, golden morning, while Elsa Lang stood by the rail and hummed to herself:

"*Connais-tu le pays?*"

Even in that muted register, her voice was sweet as running water, mellower than the lightest note of a moon-drunk mocking bird. At her elbow a young man laughed, whispering a strain of syncopated exultation:

"I love you, Honolulu!"

He flatted the last of it badly, and Elsa Lang's fine brows drew together above her straight little nose. Then she met his eyes, and something blossomed in her own.

She explained hurriedly, to cover the flush she felt stinging her cheeks:

"I shouldn't be singing that, really. *Mignon's* a contralto rôle."

"And what are you?"

"And what am I? Oh, Jerry! Didn't you hear me—in the ship's concert last night?"

"I should say I did," returned Jerry cheerfully. "You ought never to wear anything but pink, child. You looked good enough to eat—if you leave it to me."

"But my voice—my voice!" begged Elsa Lang, as one who directs attention to the sunrise.

"I liked that thing about 'Bye, Baby, Bye,'" said Jerry modestly.

She shook her head at him, frowning.

"That was only a silly little cradle song—to catch the crowd. I sang *Butterfly*, Jerry—'Some day he'll come'—from the second act—remember?"

"Sure! It was great," said Jerry.

"Next winter," said Elsa Lang, her hands clasped on the rail before her, her eyes wide, "next winter I shall be singing *Butterfly* in New York!"

"And I," said Jerry, "shall be graciously accepting commissions for buying and selling stocks, right here in Honolulu." He began his weirdly flatted song again.

"Jerry, don't!" cried Elsa Lang.

"Don't care for it? Sorry!" he told her meekly. "It's one of the few I know."

The traffic on the dock grew noisier. Feet passed and repassed, and the gold world warmed to blue.

"Don't let's waste any more time on *Butterfly*," said Jerry Thompson suddenly. "Everybody's up on deck now. Your mother'll be kidnaping you presently, and I've got to beat it as soon as we land. When do I see you again?"

She looked at him, a little startled. It had not come home to her, before, that the six days' careless, delicious intimacy of shipboard was over. A tremor touched her lovely lips. Her lashes flickered. She spoke uncertainly:

"I'm singing here Friday night."

"If I've got the price of a ticket, I'll be on hand to encourage you," said Jerry kindly. "But listen, child. When can I come around?"

"To-day's Wednesday," said Elsa Lang, "and I've got to rest. To-morrow's Thursday, and I've got to practice. I haven't practiced in a week. Also, to-morrow there'll be a massage and a manicure and a shampoo. Friday, rest again——"

"Are you trying to turn me down?" asked Jerry.

He touched her clasped fingers reproachfully.

"No—I'm not," said Elsa Lang. "No—no—indeed I'm not, Jerry! It's just that I've never had——" She stopped, her eyes curiously wistful in her fresh, charming face. "No one ever does come just to *see* me—that's all. It's a little bit difficult to arrange. Mother——"

"You've said it," he interrupted hotly. "That's why."

"Mother?" repeated Elsa Lang.

"It's a crime!" he asserted.

"What do you mean?"

"If your mother hadn't been desperately seasick," said Jerry bluntly, "do you suppose I'd ever have had a chance at you? Not likely! We might have met—that would have been all. How do you do and good-by—Miss Lang and Mr. Thompson. Not any Jerry and Elsa, if your mother'd been around. Oh, I can see she's got no use for me. But why? What's she got against me? She barely knows me."

Elsa Lang looked away from him across the green waters of the harbor and the smoke of Honolulu.

"It's my career," she said, with entire simplicity. "It isn't you. I can't do anything that interferes—don't you see?"

"I'd interfere, all right," Jerry assured her pleasantly. "You poor, beautiful child, you! Singing your little *Butterflies* and grubbing away at your

little practicing—and thinking you're living—— By golly! Elsa—you're not going to forget last night—after the concert—up in the bow——"

"No—I'm not going to forget it," said Elsa Lang unwillingly. She looked away from him, flushing.

"That's good," said Jerry. "I wish now I'd kissed you." He leaned closer, smiling irresistibly at the little gasp his words drew from her. "I knew I'd be sorry if I didn't. I wouldn't bet a hat you're not sorry, yourself. What's life for if you can't be honest by moonlight, Elsa?"

"You mustn't talk to me like that," said Elsa Lang nervously.

"All right. I've said all I've got to say—till next time. I'm coming to see you to-night."

"Oh, I can't promise——"

"About eight—at the Moana—eh? What's the matter? Don't you *want* me to come?"

"Of course I do, but——"

"Settled, then," said Jerry, disposing of the question none too soon. Behind the daughter the mother came, stepping wearily.

Mrs. Lang's face, after six days of the Pacific, was very pale, but her eyes, if deep ringed, were undaunted. She was ready for disembarking, even to Elsa's jewel case, held in her gloved left hand.

"Elsa," she reproached, "you might have remembered. I'm not feeling very strong yet. You've left your coat in the cabin, and we're almost in."

"Let me!" said Jerry quickly.

But Mrs. Lang refused him; she waved Elsa off imperatively.

"We needn't trouble you. I'll say good-by now. Glad to have met you, Mr. Thompson."

"I hope to see you again," Jerry offered, lingering.

Mrs. Lang's tired eyelids lifted. She was, after a hard, faded fashion of her own, an uncommonly pretty woman.

"Oh! Elsa sings Friday and Monday nights. The Monday-night program is really the better."

Jerry persisted, with his engaging smile.

"But in private life—Mrs. Lang?"

"Elsa," said Elsa's mother pointedly, "has no private life." She added, with a sardonic little grimace, "I suppose it wasn't I you wished to see?"

So Jerry had gone when Elsa Lang came up from her cabin again, and the blue world settled oddly into gray.

There was a great bustle about the gangplank at the moment of leaving, in the midst of which the purser slipped a note into Elsa's fingers. It said briefly:

To-night, about eight. Regards to *Butterfly*.
JERRY.

Elsa read it and thrust it down the open collar of her blouse just before her mother turned that way.

"Warm, isn't it?" said Mrs. Lang. "You look a little flushed, Elsa."

Then the two were met on the dock by a number of utterly extraneous personages and led to a waiting machine, and the spider web of a career flung clutching filaments once more around and about and above and below the poor little fly that was Elsa's heart.

She was given a cool, white room, with surf grumbling somewhere outside the windows, and told to rest. She was given hot milk to drink and a rose-colored, silken thing to go to sleep in. Seven days ago, Elsa would have drunk the milk and donned the rose color and lain down on the bed and slept like an infant. Now, she lay flat on her back, with her round white arms flung up above her head, and stared at the ceiling and thought of Jerry. She was not at all sure of the color of his eyes—a reflection opening upon pleasantly endless meadows of thought. If he came that night—having known him even six days, she amended the thought—when

he came that night, would she be able to see him? If he *had* kissed her, up in the bow— Was she sorry he had not kissed her? Shamelessly sorry—or not?

Elsa thought of the only masculine kisses she had ever known. A succession of fat tenors passed through her mind—thick lips an inch or so away from hers, ardent eyes half closed in the effort of producing a perfect sound. Jerry's ghost of an ungiven kiss was never, never like that!

"Some day he'll come—" *Butterfly's* love song drifted through her mind. Eventually she slept.

Mrs. Lang, meanwhile, gave out an interview with photographs of the singer, talked with the local impresario, did a little subtle press-agenting, and made a few harmless engagements, including a reception by the Thursday Morning Music Club to Elsa Lang.

Mrs. Lang's pallor was a little deeper by luncheon, but she had no time for either sleep or hot milk.

"Find me a stenographer," she told the hotel clerk, on her way back to her room after a hurried meal, "for about two hours. I want a good one. I've got two weeks' correspondence to clean up."

The good stenographer arrived in time, but the two weeks' correspondence spread itself over the better part of the afternoon. When Elsa woke, her mother was still dictating. So Elsa got up, looked at herself in the glass, and remembered Jerry. The thought of him was like a rosy mist obscuring all her old horizons. She began to turn over in her mind her prettiest gowns. She had about decided to receive him that night in blue when her mother opened the door.

"Get a hot bath, dear, and dress. I've had the green-and-silver taffeta put out for you. We're dining at the country club with Mrs. Baillie."

"Who's Mrs. Baillie?" asked Elsa

Lang. She looked at her mother with large, resentful eyes. Her pretty color faded a little.

"President of the Thursday Morning Music thing. It's quite a large party. She's having a reception for you tomorrow—some of the most prominent people in the town." Mrs. Lang came over to stand beside Elsa and lay a large, firm hand on the girl's white shoulder. "We've got them, dear. I knew it would come sooner or later. Just that little announcement about the Metropolitan makes all the difference in the world. All you've got to do now is to keep working——"

"All!" said Elsa.

"The house is sold out for both concerts—already."

Elsa fingered a curl of hair, leaf brown and silken, that hung on one shoulder.

"I—I wanted to do something else to-night," she objected. Her voice wavered. "Suppose I had an engagement of my own, mother. You never consult me——"

"If you mean that Thompson shrimp," Mrs. Lang returned crisply, "I hope he won't force me to tell him what I think of him. If you were foolish enough to make an engagement without knowing what your plans were—you can leave word at the office."

So Elsa Lang left a hopeless little note at the office. Jerry found it when he came at eight to call:

DEAR JERRY: I'm sorry. It really isn't any use. My time isn't my own. Come and hear me sing Friday night. I'll sing for you, anyhow.

ELSA.

Now, to Jerry, the offer of a song was like a sunset presented to a blind man. He knew the wonder was there because he heard people talking about it, but, for all that his ears told him, the cackle of a hen on the broad highway was just as sweet and not half so tiring. At least you didn't have to sit in a straight-backed orchestra chair to

listen to it. Short of a snare drum and a trombone, Jerry held all music an affection and a polite wearying of the flesh. When he tried to sing, he made strange noises and painful minor sounds, through which he was apt to smile endearingly, never knowing the chill that ran in the blood of those who listened to him. Jerry, in brief, was tone deaf, or very nearly so. It was one of Fate's little jokes that he should have carried his merry heart to a girl with the call of a thrush in her throat.

For if music meant nothing to Jerry, it meant to Elsa Lang the Only Art; and to Elsa Lang's mother, it meant not only art, but life, death, and love. A queer triangle—Jerry, Elsa, and Mrs. Lang!

"My time isn't my own," Elsa had written.

"No? We'll see about that!" said Jerry.

Opposition had crystallized his budding passion, a thing that Mrs. Lang had not foreseen. Jerry put the note into his pocket and, like the King of France, marched down the hill again. He was not beaten. He had but just begun to fight.

When the curtain of the Hawaiian Opera House rose upon Elsa's stage that Friday night, Jerry was there. When Elsa, gowned in cerise and silver, after a panel by Fragonard, walked down to the footlights and bowed her lovely head to the crowded house, Jerry suffered a pang of Briarean jealousy. He wanted to put his arms around her and carry her off to some starlit dark. He wanted to strangle the audience, for fear it wouldn't applaud her, and he wanted to strike off its head because it did. When the man beside him, an immaculate fool with eyeglasses, said to his neighbor, "Some peach—what?" Jerry put a finger inside his own beautiful, flawless collar and loosened it fiercely

because he seemed to be choking, somehow.

Later in the evening, a madly perspiring usher handed up over the foot-lights a sheaf of glorious roses with Jerry's card, and Elsa hugged them to her in one arm—a delicious and naïve gesture if only she had not already done the same to carnations and daisies and lilies and orchids.

The great, dark, shining piano was banked with the flowers of applause.

At the end of the concert, Elsa Lang came back, in answer to a thundering encore, and sang, very simply, but more beautifully than all the birds in all the bushes, "My Old Kentucky Home."

Did she remember what Jerry had told her, among other things, that night up in the bow—that he had been born and raised in Louisville? That tune, at least, he could follow. Oh, well! There was a lump in Jerry's throat when she finished, and an empty, empty aching in his arms.

The paper next morning said that Elsa Lang's technique was amazing, that her crystalline sweetness of voice was youth itself, but that she lacked a certain depth of emotion—not abandon, so much as the capacity for abandon—Who cares what papers say? Elsa only glanced at the criticism and flung it aside. She had slept with a scribbled card under her pillow, and she was trying to find a way for Jerry to get to her.

But Saturday was already full, of utterly stupid things and people, and Sunday had not an empty moment to throw to a dog.

"We've never had such a reception anywhere before," said Mrs. Lang proudly. "These people are crazy about you."

"I never want to see a cup of tea again!" said Elsa.

She had had two notes from Jerry and a great box of violets. For the rest, she was sure that he had tele-

phoned more than once, and she had not been there to answer him.

"I'm sick of people!" she added dully.

"Lie down and I'll bring you a little hot milk," said her mother. "You *must* take care of yourself."

"For what?" said Elsa. She meant, of course, for whom.

Nevertheless, it was while Mrs. Lang was away on the quest of the ever-flowing hot milk that the telephone in the apartment rang and Jerry's voice came over the wire to Elsa's hungry ear.

"May I speak to Miss— Child! Is that you?" said Jerry.

"Jerry! Is it *you*?" cried Elsa.

When love comes in at the door, language goes out of the window.

"I'd about given you up," said Jerry.

"It isn't my fault," said Elsa.

"I know that, honey child."

"*What* did you say?"

"Don't be greedy! I'll say it again some day."

"I didn't understand you," said Elsa.

She dimpled. Poor little *Mimi—Marguerite—Juliette!* She had never dimpled to a lover of her own before. When you have heard, 'I love you,' only sung, on a pure, high C, its sudden transposition to a husky whisper goes to the head. She cuddled the receiver close to her ear, and the cheek that it touched grew warmly rose. Her lips trembled to an incredulous, kissable smile. You might have thought they had been made for kisses, not for cadenzas.

"Oh, Jerry, Jerry, Jerry!" said Elsa.

"Listen!" said Jerry quickly. "Listen, honey child! I've *got* to see you! I've tried every way in the calendar, but I seem to be *non grata* with the authorities. You've got to help me. You've got to assert yourself. Listen—Elsa! You *want* to see me, don't you?"

"More than—more than anything else!" said Elsa.

"You know what I want to tell you, don't you?"

At that moment, of course, Mrs. Lang returned with the cup of hot milk and stood in the doorway, staring.

"Elsa!" she said coldly. "Who is that?"

Elsa spoke into the mouthpiece. Her hand shook a little; so did her voice.

"Come at eight, Jerry," she said hurriedly. "I shall be very glad to see you."

Then she hung up the receiver and faced her mother, an act that required at the moment a certain amount of courage.

"That was Jerry Thompson," said Elsa. "He's coming up to see me at eight o'clock. I'm not singing to-night, and I don't want to go to any parties. Please ask whomever we were going out with to excuse me."

Mrs. Lang's blue eyes looked deep and long into her daughter's gray ones. What she saw there made her smile, a slight, muscular contraction, with lips down drawn at the end of it.

"Very well," she said quietly. "I'll make excuses for both of us. I wish to see Mr. Thompson, myself, when he arrives."

Jerry, innocent of the fight that the stars in their courses were waging against him, was at that moment laying out his clothes and swearing happily over a misplaced stud.

He came at eight, prompt to the moment, and Mrs. Lang, herself, opened the door of Elsa's sitting room to his knock.

"Come in, Mr. Thompson," said Mrs. Lang. "I'm very glad of this opportunity to see you."

So Jerry came in. Elsa came forward from a window across the room and gave him a cold little hand. Her big gray eyes were dark with a helpless sort of hurt. In her gay pink

gown, she looked rather young and distinctly pale.

"The old dragon's been bullying her," thought Jerry, with a hot flush of anger.

He took the chair the dragon offered him and sat down. Elsa and her mother sat down as well, stiffly, the mother in a straight-backed chair. The room was full of flowers. Jerry's roses stood by the piano, but he missed his violets. The truth was that Elsa had kept them in her own room—on a table beside her bed.

"Mr. Thompson," said Mrs. Lang—she gave Jerry no time for scouting, left no room for delicate preliminaries—"you knew that Elsa had not the time to see you!"

"To-day," said Jerry coolly, "is the first time I've been able to speak to Miss Lang. I had no means of knowing what she felt about it."

"I spoke with you—over the telephone—twice."

"You never told me, mother," said Elsa suddenly. She held her hands tight clasped in her lap.

"But what I really wanted," Jerry insisted with his most ingratiating grin, "was to speak to your daughter."

"I see," said Mrs. Lang. "You force me to be frank with you, Mr. Thompson?"

"Mother!" pleaded Elsa unhappily.

"If you please," said Jerry.

He was really rather a fine figure of a young man, clean cut and engaging; the severe black and white of his clothes set off his hazel eyes, the clear tan of his skin, and the well-bred, long-fingered hands.

"I should like to ask you first—" began Mrs. Lang. She stopped and altered the form of her inquisition a trifle. "I don't suppose your income is more than that which a young man of your age commonly earns?"

Elsa left her chair and went over to the stand by the window, her back to

the room. Every line of her body expressed a desperate resentment, which her mother disregarded utterly.

Jerry smiled and shrugged, lifted his eyebrows, and slipped one hand into his pocket. He named a figure.

"Elsa," said Mrs. Lang, without a flicker of comment, "will soon make more in a night than you do in a month."

"Pretty fine!" commented Jerry.

"She is practically under contract to the Metropolitan. You know what that means."

"Poor little kid!" said Jerry.

Mrs. Lang's eyes showed a spark behind their grimness.

"You will see for yourself——"

"Now that it's been pointed out to me."

"Mr. Thompson," said Mrs. Lang very coldly, "have you the impertinence to laugh at me?"

From the window Elsa's small white hand went out in groping protest, unseen.

"Do you think," said Elsa Lang's mother, a little fiercely, "that you, a mere stockbroker in a small town, that you—or anybody like you—will be allowed to interfere with Elsa's future?"

"What makes you so sure that I *could* interfere?" asked Jerry quietly.

He had laid his finger on Achilles' heel. Elsa put both hands over her eyes with a swift, exquisite gesture. But Mrs. Lang's eyes winced, unsheltered.

"Because Elsa is just such a little fool," she said curtly.

"Thank you," said Jerry Thompson. "You've told me something I wanted mighty badly to know."

The look that passed between the man and the girl was like a flame leaping across the room. It left the older woman thwarted and sick with defeat.

"Listen," she said grimly. "Elsa, come here and sit down. If there's any

sense left in the world, I may be able to save you from yourself."

Elsa came, lagging, her cheeks on fire. She sat down and looked at her hands folded once more in her lap. She scarcely seemed to hear her mother's next few words.

"When I was seventeen, I took singing lessons," said Mrs. Lang, "from an Italian in my home town—my old home. I had a voice. He discovered that it was a big one."

"You?" cried Elsa, startled.

"Where did you think you got yours?" demanded her mother coldly. "I could sing. I could sing as easily as a bird. I had a natural register of over two octaves. And my voice was opening up—it grew stronger all the time. I hadn't a great deal of money, but what I could scrape together I spent on lessons. And I had the power—I had the desire. I could sing splendor into people's eyes. I could feel the thing growing in my throat——"

She stopped in her queer, monotonous recitative and touched with the tips of her fingers the side of her throat, as if indeed she felt old music prisoned there.

"Escalois, my old teacher, told me one day: 'I'm done. I've taught you all I know. *Elsa—Brunhilde—Yseult*—they're all waiting for you. Go find a bigger master than I.' So I went to New York."

"That's where you married father," said Elsa curiously.

Mrs. Lang smiled, the bitterest smile in the world.

"Exactly," she said. "That's where I met your father—and married him. The thing in me that told me how *Yseult* should be sung stole my chance of ever singing her. I married your father. You were born a year later." She opened one hand and closed it again. Till then she had not stirred a finger. "Sometimes I hummed to you

in your cradle," she said. "That was all."

"Wasn't it worth it?" asked Elsa, trembling.

"I think it must have been," said Jerry slowly.

"Then you think wrong," said Mrs. Lang, her deep eyes burning. "Let me tell you the truth this once, if you never hear it from any human soul again. I was ill for a long time after Elsa's birth, and my voice left me. I had given it all up for love—love was all I had left—and *love doesn't last*. It's nothing—it's the merest dream—the flimsiest cobweb—the most pitiful illusion. When it's gone, your hands are empty, and it goes—between daylight and dark. It's work that is real—the work you do for your art. It's the only real thing in the world."

She silenced Elsa's half-uttered protest.

"Listen to me! When I found that Elsa could sing, I began to live again. I'd been starving for my work—starving for the songs I never sang, starving for the rôles I never played, starving for the fame I never even started on the road to—starving! So I turned it all into Elsa. Her father died, and I took what little money he left and went abroad with her. I've given up my life to make her what she is. She's had her chance. She's going to be one of the big singers of the world. She's going to have all that I missed. *And do you think that you can stop her?*"

One of Jerry's roses fell to pieces, its big red petals sifting down upon the floor with a soft, whispering sound. All at once, Mrs. Lang's eyes, keen and bold as an eagle's, filmed with tears. Her face contorted oddly. She got to her feet and went blindly out of the room.

When she had left them, they looked at each other a moment in silence. Then Jerry put out his hand, that long-fingered, sunburned hand that no

woman could look at without pleasure, and laid it on Elsa's arm. But Elsa pushed him away.

"Don't, Jerry!" she said brokenly.

"Not now. I couldn't."

So Jerry went home, his heart a trifle older than when he had come; and if he had loved Elsa before, he wanted her now as a man who is a man should want a woman before he asks her to marry him.

That was Sunday night. Monday went by, morning and afternoon, very quietly; but in the machine on the way to the opera house, Monday night, Elsa Lang clenched her small hands tight on the long white gloves that lay in her lap and said to her mother:

"Jerry and I—are—going to be—married—to-night, after the concert."

If you are going to stab at all, stab deep.

It did not occur to Mrs. Lang that the blow might be evaded. Stiff and white, she said with equal quietness:

"When did you see him?"

"He telephoned me twice to-day."

"And you have made up your mind? You realize what you are giving up—for that——" She stopped, impotently shaken.

"I've made up my mind." The soul that had depended for so long, as no soul should, upon another soul, added its pitiful appeal: "I'm sorry—mother!"

"Not half so sorry as you will be," said Mrs. Lang hoarsely.

When Elsa's lips parted, trembling, the mother uttered a breathless cry of despair:

"For God's sake, don't speak to me!"

They rode the rest of the way in silence, and Elsa Lang walked out upon the stage to sing, with her face freshly rouged and powdered, but her big eyes wet. She sang a little French song, and at the end of its plaintive phrases, the heart of the house went up to her over the footlights.

Even Jerry, who sat between strangers with a marriage license in his pocket, his hands growing tenser and tenser, saw that this was music. Only, for Jerry, real music had to be lived. He looked up at Elsa Lang, and, finding him, by some lover's magic, in that welter of faces, Elsa Lang looked down at him—and sang—

If you can put the ecstasy of the first dawn and the shudder of the first dark, the thrilling agony of the first sin and the untellable sweetness of the first caress, into one woman's voice, you have the things that Elsa sang that night. The program spoke of "Faust," of "Romeo et Juliette," and of "Rigoletto," as programs do.

When it was all over, Jerry went behind the scenes to look for Elsa. He found her standing a little to one side behind a dusty urn, her arms full of his roses, a dark cloak thrown over her white tulle and pearls.

She smiled at him adorably, if faintly.

"Here I am, Jerry. I'm ready."

Jerry's hand came over hers, crushing her fingers.

"I'm going to tell your mother first. We won't sneak off."

"I told her—coming down—"

"You? You brave little kid! She was—"

"Yes—she was furious."

Jerry's chin set firmly. His eyes grew dark.

"You'll never be sorry! Never—I promise you! She said love doesn't last. You'll see!"

"I think she never had it—or it would have lasted," said Elsa, with a little sob of excitement. "Jerry—"

Mrs. Lang came out of the shadows behind them. She had capably disposed of a newspaper man and several other people and superintended, from force of habit, the removal of Elsa's flowers. When she stood beside Elsa, her face was hard.

"Well?" she demanded.

"Good-by, mother!" Elsa whispered. She put out a hand, lifted an imploring face.

"We hope you can forgive us, Mrs. Lang," Jerry offered very gravely. His own mother would have adored him in that moment of young, appealing dignity.

"I'm going with you," said Mrs. Lang.

"We are going to be married," Jerry warned.

"So I understand," said Mrs. Lang dryly. "As Elsa's mother, however, I think I'd better go along as far as the ceremony. Some day she may get tired of you and want to come back to me. It won't have hurt her art, in that case. It's my only hope."

Jerry grinned unexpectedly.

"Don't expect us to share it!"

But Elsa caught her mother's hand up against her own soft, burning cheek.

"Mother—mother—if you only knew!"

The words for her mother, the look for her lover.

"If only I did *not* know!" said Mrs. Lang grimly.

Then their two hands slipped apart, and while in the moonlit street people waited for their cars and spoke to each other in thrilled, swift phrases of the singer and her songs, Elsa Lang went out of the small side door of the opera house on her way to be married.



Men of Mystery

Albert Payson Terhune



Saint-Germain: The Man Who Could Not Die

I AM going to tell this story as if it were the truth, and I am going to draw every incident in it from established chroniclers; yet—in spite of Walpole and Lang and a host of other reliable authorities—the alleged facts are mighty hard to swallow, and, once swallowed, they are wholly indigestible. But if it is a lie, it is not *my* lie.

By the way, if you look up Saint-Germain in the reference books and histories, be careful not to confuse him with the very reputable and nonmysterious statesman of the same name.

His first proven appearance was at the court of Louis XV., of France, in the year 1748. He was a dapper, good-looking chap, apparently in the late thirties, with a hard-bitten face and a lean, compact body, and possessed of a brilliancy and a charm of manner that made their mark even in a court where dullness was nearly as unpopular as virtue.

But the thing that first drew every eye to him and set every tongue a-wag was his meeting with the Baroness de Gergy. The baroness was very, very old. She had a flawless memory, too, and all her faculties were still keenly alert. Moreover—in her latter years,

at least—she was glumly respectable and was never involved in any of the tricks or questionable jokes that made life a joy or a pest to so many of her fellow courtiers.

At a *petit lever*, at Versailles, one day in 1750, the Baroness de Gergy was talking to a group of people when Saint-Germain walked into the room. She blinked at him in stark incredulity. Then—forgetful of etiquette and of everything else in her momentary amazement—she tottered across to him. With hands outstretched and with tears skittering down her be-patched cheeks, she exclaimed:

"My friend! My dear old friend! It cannot be you! And yet I cannot be mistaken!"

Saint-Germain greeted her with warm cordiality. None of the bystanders was especially interested in the reunion until the baroness went on, in shrill astonishment:

"It was at Venice I last saw you, chevalier. And that was in 1700—no—in 1699."

People began to stare. Madame de Gergy's keen brain was apparently giving way, for she was actually claiming to remember Saint-Germain as an in-

timate friend of fifty years ago, and, at most, Saint-Germain could not be more than forty.

But, as their talk went on, it became plain to the gaping listeners that if Madame de Gergy were demented, Saint-Germain also must be insane, for he and she were eagerly reminding each other of petty details of their stay at Venice, a half century back.

Unless it was a wonderful bit of acting, they had been close friends at that remote time, the ancient baroness and the man who did not look over forty; and the grim dullness of the baroness' character forbade any idea that she was acting. Moreover, Madame de Gergy loudly declared that the chevalier looked not a day older than when she had known him in 1700.

From that instant, Saint-Germain's reputation as a Man of Mystery was established. He was a mystery no one could solve. Even the skeptics were silenced by Madame de Gergy's very evident sincerity and by the facts wherewith she backed up her testimony.

Louis XV., worthless, crafty, pleasure loving, heard the story. He sent for Saint-Germain and questioned him privately. It would be interesting to know the outlines of that secret talk, but neither king nor chevalier would tell them.

Nevertheless, Louis XV. henceforth treated Saint-Germain with an almost grotesque respect and affection. He made a close friend of the chevalier and humbly deferred to him in matters of statecraft. He did more—he dropped a hint about the man to Madame de Pompadour, the reigning court favorite. And, to every one's surprise, the lazily insolent Pompadour began to show the same cringing courtesy to Saint-Germain as had the king. But she was less reticent than was Louis; she declared her belief that Saint-Ger-

main was at least eighteen hundred years old!

People did not laugh at this absurdity. People knew too much to laugh when the Pompadour spoke, except when, by voice or face, she showed that she was joking. It was not safe. Besides, the manner of the king and of the favorite toward Saint-Germain impressed every one.

One night at a court ball, Madame de Pompadour turned to Saint-Germain and asked, loudly enough for all to hear:

"What manner of man was his majesty, King Francis I.? Was he the sort of monarch I could have loved?"

A shiver ran through the room, for Francis I. had been dead for two hundred years. Saint-Germain alone was unperturbed. He seemed to think the Pompadour's query perfectly natural, and he replied carelessly:

"He was a royal good fellow, but he was too stubborn and fiery. At one time, I could have given him a very useful piece of advice, but he would not listen to me."

"And Margaret de Valois—*la Reine Margot*?" spoke up a courtier, half amused, half scared, as he mentioned the royal French siren who had been married to Henry of Navarre in 1572. "Was she as beautiful as rumor says?"

"She was beautiful," returned Saint-Germain, "but to my mind less lovely than her sister-in-law, Marie Stuart—Mary Queen of Scots."

He then went on to describe, with a wealth of close detail, the two long-dead beauties, talking of them with an assurance and a familiarity that carried conviction to the most cynical of his hearers.

When he had finished his dreamy reminiscences, he glanced around the circle and seemed for the first time to note the awe on his hearers' white faces. With a forced laugh, he exclaimed:

"Sometimes I amuse myself—not by *making* people believe, but by *letting* them believe—I am many centuries old."

Which lame excuse convinced nobody.

You must remember that all this happened in an age when most people still believed in a magical elixir of youth and in the philosopher's stone and in the sale of souls to Satan and in every form of witchcraft. Nowadays, we are grown so wise that we put our trust in nothing—except perhaps in get-rich-quick circulars and poison-needle scares and in a touchingly sweet belief that ignorant outsiders can beat Wall Street's game. Is it more ridiculous, for example, to believe that a mysterious touchstone can turn iron into gold than that a shrewd mining syndicate will give investors something for nothing? And as to the olden belief in magic elixirs of youth—well, have you never read a modern patent-medicine advertisement? Those ancestors of ours were a foolish, gullible lot, to be sure. That is why they were our ancestors.

Quickly through France the mystery spread. They centered on two theories: first, that Saint-Germain was the original Wandering Jew; second, that he had the secret of a magic elixir that made him immortal. Both theories had a host of adherents, and both had stacks of plausible testimony to back them.

You remember, of course, the legend of the Wandering Jew? Christ, on His way to Calvary, passed by a doorway, in the Via Crucis, where stood a Hebrew who savagely mocked Him. The Savior, pausing for an instant in the journey to Golgotha, said to him:

"Tarry thou till I come!"

And until the Second Coming of Christ, the wretch is condemned to live on, a homeless wanderer upon the face

of the earth—doomed to a horrible immortality.

Eugène Sue and a throng of lesser writers have seized on the legend for fictional use. Dozens of men, in real life, throughout the ages, have been pointed out as the Wandering Jew.

Saint-Germain—perhaps through blasphemous mischief—helped out this belief, in his own case, by shuddering as if with a spasm of remorse whenever he saw a crucifix; a trick Cagliostro, a few years later, duly copied. He was once asked, point-blank, why he did this. Sadly he replied:

"I believe I was a witness of the Crucifixion. I walked the earth at Nero's side. I have argued with Cicero. I have discussed history with Tacitus."

His knowledge of Hebrew and of other ancient Oriental languages was profound. He would sometimes halt before a painting or statue group, by a modern artist, of a scene a thousand years earlier and would point out defects in the way a pictorial garment was worn or in the style of a headdress. He did this with the air of a teacher explaining faults of anachronism in a primary pupil's history essay.

There were folk who went straightway to antique books or drawings, to learn whether Saint-Germain were right in such statements of dress detail, and invariably they found that he was. So the awed wonder increased. Not that his knowledge along this line proved anything, for chronological errors in art were so glaring in those days that any careful student could detect them. Witness, for example, the famous painting of the marriage of Joseph and the Virgin Mary, wherein a priest is depicted as reading the marriage ceremony out of a bound and printed book. Witness, too, in far more recent times, the celebrated painting—dear to insurance calendars—"Washington Crossing the Delaware," in which the Father of his Country is

shown in a boat that carries an American flag—although the first American flag was not sewn or even designed until the year after Washington's Delaware boating trip.

But the second theory about the chevalier was much the more popular. It was gravely asserted that, among his other occult secrets, Saint-Germain had the formula for an elixir of life, a mystic fluid that would make him live on until the end of the world.

According to some chroniclers, he freely admitted that he owned such an elixir and boasted that it had already kept him alive for two thousand years. According to others, he even displayed a vial of it—and analysts proved it to be nothing more potent than senna tea.

It is known that Madame de Pompadour begged him to give the king some of this elixir and that Saint-Germain refused in terror. Nor is this strange, since none but accredited medical incompetents had a right to prescribe for royalty, and hideously unpleasant tortures awaited any man suspected of trying to poison his majesty—even with a magic elixir.

But the incident was enough to set the court doctors to foaming at the mouth. To the king they hurried with their complaint, but his majesty laughingly sent them about their business. Whereat, one of them—Doctor Quesnay—wrote in his memoirs:

"This Saint-Germain is a quack, for he babbles of an elixir of life. Yet our master, the king, is obstinate and treats him as one of illustrious birth."

Another mystery in the halo of puzzles that glowed about Saint-Germain's shapely head was his boundless wealth. Unlike most adventurers, he was never in need of money. He not only had unlimited means at his command, in the form of gold and notes, but he also possessed heaps and mounds of precious stones.

He never spoke of the sources of his

wealth or made a display of it, nor did he gamble or swindle or engage in business. Some gossips whispered that he was the natural or the disowned son of a royal house and that his riches were drawn from a nation's treasury. More people declared that he had amassed his colossal fortune, bit by bit, in the twenty centuries he had lived. But the favorite belief was that he had the power of making gold and jewels. Here is one authentic anecdote to bear out this idea:

King Louis, hearing the rumors as to the sources of Saint-Germain's riches, bluntly asked him if he could make precious stones.

"Well," evaded the chevalier, "I can at least remove flaws from them. It is an alchemist secret I picked up in Asia."

At once the king handed him a big diamond, pointing to a flaw in it and asking:

"Can you make this flawed diamond perfect?"

"With ease, your majesty," answered Saint-Germain, with so much assurance that Louis perhaps doubted his sincerity.

For the king, then and there, sent for the best jeweler in Paris to examine the stone. The jeweler jotted down notes whereby he would again be able to recognize the diamond. He appraised it at one thousand two hundred dollars.

Saint-Germain departed with the stone. Four weeks later, he came back with it and handed it to the king. The diamond was flawless. The jeweler identified it and now appraised it at two thousand dollars.

This incident, as I said, is true. Even Andrew Lang does not deny it, though he cynically suggests that Saint-Germain may have substituted a perfect stone for the flawed diamond. In which case, he paid out eight hundred

dollars for the privilege of playing a rather silly trick.

Count Cobenzl saw Saint-Germain turn iron into gold. At least, the count cautiously writes:

"He transmuted base metal into a substance that seemed to be gold and that was quite as beautiful."

Cobenzl was the Austrian ambassador to France, and was reputed both wise and honest. Yet he gravely made this statement over his own signature, and added that Saint-Germain had rediscovered—or learned of old—the lost secret of making the famous Tyrian dyes. Also, that he could make such pigments for oil paintings as had been unknown since the days of the ancients.

"I have had in my hands all these productions of his," wrote Cobenzl. "They were made under my own eyes. The man is all-wise, and he shows an admirable simplicity and uprightness."

So impressed was Louis XV. with Saint-Germain that he not only grew to asking and accepting his advice in politics, but sent him to foreign countries as a secret diplomatic agent. He was chiefly struck by the chevalier's tolerant contempt for his fellow men—such a contempt as a college president might feel for the antics of a group of defective kindergarten children. He spoke to the chevalier of this trait. Saint-Germain replied:

"Sire, to entertain any esteem for men, one must be neither a confessor, a diplomat, nor a police officer."

"Nor a king," chimed in Louis.

Hitherto, Saint-Germain had been looked on with awe. Now, on his entrance into politics, France's statesmen began to hate him. They feared his uncanny wisdom; they hotly resented his odd influence over Louis. Voltaire, writing of him to Frederick the Great, said:

"Certain state secrets are known only to Saint-Germain—who was present at

the Council of Trent, in our fathers' day, and who will probably meet your majesty a half century hence. He is a man who knows everything *and who never dies.*"

Saint-Germain speedily found that it was easier to persuade folk he was immortal than to persuade them he had a right to "sit in" at the slimy game of politics. While he was at a Hague Conference, his enemies managed to poison Louis' mind against him and to bar his return to Paris. A fellow diplomat wrote a letter to his own government, fiercely attacking Saint-Germain. In part, the letter ran:

"I think this adventurer is near the end of his resources. He tried lately to convince us that he had completely cured a man who had lost a thumb. As a matter of fact, when the thumb was cut off, this Saint-Germain merely picked it up from the ground, several yards away from the man who had lost it, and stuck it on again with strong glue."

If this version of the cure is true, the discovery of a glue strong enough to make a man's severed thumb grow in place again is not the least of the wonders laid at the chevalier's door.

Shut out from France, he drifted to England. There, he cut a wide swath in London society, was arrested later as a spy, and was almost at once set free. As to his English sojourn, we have the word of the stodgily solid Horace Walpole, who wrote of him:

"The other day they seized an odd man—the Chevalier de Saint-Germain. He has been here these two years and will not tell who he is or whence he comes, but professes that he does not go by his right name. He sings and plays a violin wonderfully, and composes. He is called an Italian, a Spaniard, a Pole, a somebody that married a great fortune in Mexico and ran away with her jewels to Constantinople, a priest, a fiddler, a vast nobleman. The

Prince of Wales has had an unsated curiosity about him, but in vain. However, nothing has been made out against him. He is released. And—what convinces me that he is not a gentleman—he stays on here and talks of his being taken up for a spy."

It was in England, too, that Saint-Germain awoke admiration along a wholly new line—namely, as a composer of "best seller" popular songs. Every goose-neck tenor and mooring contralto in London was at one time warbling his ditties; notably a song entitled: "Oh, Wouldst Thou Know What Sacred Charms."

Yes, that was its name—"Oh, Wouldst Thou Know What Sacred Charms." Just that. And you are right in sneering at the lengthy and maudlin title—you who live in an age when such lyrics as "Mah Congo Chimpanzee" or "I'm Batty 'Bout Mah Baldhead Baboon Boob" have taken the place of the lavender-sweet songs of other days.

London, too, marveled at the chevalier's feat in "repeating three pages of print after one reading and in inscribing love letters with his left hand, the while he wrote verses with his right."

From England, he went to Russia. There he won two immortal honors—one by leading a Russian army to victory against the Turks, the other by being the first man to brew so-called "Russian tea."

Again he visited France—where Cagliostro, the archcharlatan, was for a time his pupil; and then he went on a tour of the Continent and settled at last in Berlin. His journeys are thus explained by one fantastic chronicler—whose theory seems more absurd than that of the elixir of life:

"He worked for the emancipation of men from ancient tyrannies. As a political agent, he gained the ear and heard the views of the most inacces-

sible ministers in Europe. As a man of fashion, he was received in every house. As an alchemist and magician, he invested himself with awe and mystery. As a musician, he disarmed doubt and was welcomed by the ladies of the court. All this to conceal his great work of preparation for a gigantic revolution which was to overthrow the tyrannies of Europe."

Louis XV. was dead. Yet, when Saint-Germain visited Paris again, he found himself warmly welcomed by the old monarch's successor, Louis XVI., and by Marie Antoinette. He rewarded this welcome—according to Madame d'Adhemar, the historian—by prophesying to the new king and queen the fall of the French monarchy and their own guillotining. Then he went back to Germany.

In 1782, while he was a guest at the palace of the Landgrave of Hesse, Saint-Germain died. His death was attested by Doctor Biester of Berlin, and many persons attended his funeral.

Two years later, his friends were very naturally surprised to see him stroll back to his old haunts and, vouchsafing no explanation, take up life again, just where he had left it off.

In 1792, no less an authority than Grisby wrote of meeting him in Paris, in one of the prisons overcrowded by Reign of Terror victims. Soon afterward came word that he had vanished, although there was no record of his escape or execution.

In 1840, a Major Fraser visited Paris, and at once certain aged Frenchmen recognized him as the long-dead Chevalier de Saint-Germain—even as Madame de Gergy, in 1750, had recognized Saint-Germain as her Venetian admirer of 1699.

Again a cloud of conjecture arose to high heaven. Out of the mists shine several clear statements by men whose word can scarce be doubted. One of these was Vandam—noted, more or

less, for his accuracy as a chronicler—who writes:

"Major Fraser, spite of his English name, was not English. He was one of the best-dressed men of the period. He lived alone and never alluded to his parentage. He was always flush of money, though his sources of income were an apparent mystery. Major Fraser's knowledge of every civilized country at every period was marvelous, though he had few books."

A mid-Victorian writer quotes the following speech of Fraser's:

"Of course," he said to me with a strange smile, 'it is ridiculous, but every now and then I feel as if my education did not come to me from reading, but from personal experience. At times I am almost convinced that I lived in the days of old Jerusalem and again with Nero; that I knew Dante personally.'"

At the major's "death" a few years afterward, not a letter was found giving a clew to his antecedents, and no money nor source of wealth was discovered.

Now, just one more reincarnation of the deathless Saint-Germain—if your patience and the shreds of your credulity will hold out a moment longer. Among divers others rumors concerning the chevalier's later escapades is one that seems to connect him with America. He is said—with what authority I do not know—to have been identified with the weird "Russell" of Civil War note.

Perhaps you remember George Cary Eggleston's short story, "Who Was Russell?" It was a tale whose truth, in every particular, was guaranteed by its narrator. No one who knew Colonel Eggleston could doubt his word. No one who heard him tell the story of Russell—as once I had the good luck to—could for a moment question his firm belief in it.

Briefly, one night in 1862, when Colonel Eggleston's division was on

"still duty" in South Carolina, a fine-looking man appeared in camp. He said he had just come from a town sixty miles away and wanted to enlist in the Confederate Army. There was no way of getting to camp from that town, through the wilderness, except by train or by walking the tracks. It was proved that Russell had done neither.

He dined that night with Eggleston, at the officers' mess, and astonished every one by his brilliancy, his phenomenal learning, his uncanny skill in riding, fencing, and shooting. He was stubbornly hazy as to his past, but seemed to know the Old World better than the New, and to be familiar with many lands.

Soon afterward, a soldier's leg was shattered by a shell. No surgeon was near, so Russell amputated the smashed leg in a masterly fashion. Eggleston, marveling at his prowess, urged him to leave the ranks and apply for a surgeon's commission. Russell curtly refused.

He was persuaded, however, to take an examination as a naval officer. Though he had pretended to know nothing about even the handling of a rowboat, he passed a perfect examination. He commanded a Confederate ship with great skill in at least one sea fight. Then he vanished.

In 1873, he walked into Colonel Eggleston's office in New York and announced that he was now a member of the local law firm of Wintermute & Russell. Colonel Eggleston returned the call. But Mr. Wintermute declared he knew no man answering to Russell's description, nor had he ever had a partner of that name. His long-dead grandfather, however, had been named Russell.

Eggleston, angry at his duping, made public the story, in print. At once he received a reply from the Reverend Lansing Burroughs, a Baptist clergy-

man of Bordentown, New Jersey. Mr. Burroughs had had similar impossible experiences with Russell—or Fraser—or Saint-Germain—and concluded his statement by saying:

"I believe that this singularly quiet, shy, well-behaved, modest gentleman, so unusually gifted, is *the devil*!"

Is he? Or is he a myth? If the latter, then at least a dozen supposedly

unimpeachable people—Voltaire, Walpole, Madame d'Adhemar, Vandam, and Cobenzl among them—were most lurid liars.

How about it?

The June number of AINSLEE'S will contain the next article in Mr. Terhune's "Men of Mystery" series: "The Lost Dauphin."



A SONG OF PAIN

I TIGHTENED swift my fretting palfrey's girth,
Drew close the silken mask across my eyes,
Felt safe my jeweled hilt. "Now, Comrade Mirth,
I seek with you the springtime-kindled skies!"
But lo, as down the May-sweet world we fared,
From out Mirth's mask, that screened, but could not hide,
The eyes of Pain dark-brooded at my side.

Then bade I curt my wander mate begone,
And by a latticed casement tightened rein.
And, "Love," I hailed, "we'll share the journey on,
And wake the way to lilting song again!"
Alone we fared, afar from human ken.
And yet, in twilight-brooded upland byre,
'Twas Pain's white hands that lit our evening fire!

I saw, and laughed my shrinking self to scorn.
"Friend Pain, too thin each clever-wrought disguise.
So be it, then! We two shall greet the morn."
And watch to-morrow's hills blue-nearing rise,
But let it be as brothers, face to face!"

He slipped aside the masking silken toy,
And lo, beneath, there smiled the lips of Joy!

MARTHA HASKELL CLARK.



Bill Heenan's Test

By William Slavens McNutt

Author of the "Bill Heenan" stories etc.

JACK BURKE sat alone at a table in one of the toughest road houses in the Territory of Alaska, covertly watching a frightened girl serve drinks to the dozen or more roughneck roisterers in the place, and reckoning his chance of living through a fight with them. He was certain that a fight was imminent and that it would be to the death between himself and every other man in the place.

He was calmly skeptical of any chance for life. The road house on the seldom-traveled Malchuk Trail was run by "Dago" Santini—who proudly admitted his former connection with an Italian murder society, boasting, when drunk, of the number of cities around the world in which he was wanted—and "Yukon" Kate, a vicious hag whom age had driven from the dance halls into a shady partnership with the ugly Italian. The patrons were the carefully chosen friends of "Shark" Markham, gambler, friend of Santini and Kate and—so persistent rumor had it—full associate with them in many a criminal venture.

Every man in the place was a potential enemy to Burke, and yet he meant to start the fight which he was reasonably certain would be his last.

The palpably frightened girl who was serving drinks to the men in the room approached the table at which Shark Markham sat, bearing a tray covered with filled glasses. Burke, sitting unobserved in the corner, slipped his right

hand under his Mackinaw and clasped the walnut butt of his gun, hanging in an arm holster.

"Just another wolf for the pack," he muttered to himself, watching the front door for the appearance of the newcomer. "Might as well have cut loose before he joined."

The door was flung open, and a huge man in frost-rimed furs strode in, followed by a thin, stooped little fellow, in a Mackinaw and wearing a sealskin cap with the large flaps tied under his chin. The big man swept his frosted parka hood back from his head, revealing a bristly stubble of reddish-blond hair. He stood for a moment swaying slightly from the hips, with the suggestion of a truculent swagger, the hint of a sparring fighter in his pose, his tiny wide-set, light-blue eyes taking a merrily insolent inventory of the room and its occupants.

"Well, look who-all's with us!" he chuckled. "What a pay streak this room'd be for a U. S. marshal, hey? Son o' mine! Build a wall around this joint an' call it a penitentiary, an' Tin Can an' me'd be the only two entitled to leave. 'Lo, Santini, yuh rat-eyed, dago poison peddler, yuh! How's the murder business these days? Pannin' out well? 'Lo, Kate! How's the old girl? How come it you an' Santini's both alive an' kickin'? I should think one o' yuh'd done for the other by this time. Too tough to cut, is he, Kate? Try cyanide in his coffee some mornin',

an' see if he'll feel it. An' Shark Markham! Sunday school an' prayer meetin'! My old friend Shark! Him that tried to deal from a cold deck in a game with me at Forty Mile. Shark, your face went an' healed fine, didn't it? I'm plumb su'prised. I figured it would look some different after I worked over it the way I done with the butt o' my .44. I figured, bein' scarred up that-a-way, you'd look more human when your nose an' all set again. But no. Ugly as ever, ain't yuh? Well, what are all you thugs an' short-card men havin'? Set 'em up, Santini, yuh greasy, limp in' lump o' human garlic, you! A round for the house on Bill Heenan—an' keep your wood alcohol to burn in stoves. Whisky for my money, dago—real hooch. Gasoline an' molasses barred, mind yuh! Set 'em up!"

The crowd took his rough insults with forced good nature. They resented his raillery less than they feared the man. He treated them as he treated his wolf dogs—roughly, mockingly, with the suggestion of fist and whip and steel ever in his voice and manner; and like Malemutes they fawned and cringed under the contemptuous dominance of the man they hated. Markham managed a laugh. Yukon Kate nodded and grinned uneasily. Santini bowed and smirked.

"Joe, he's-a feed da dog," he offered. "He's-a tak' care heem for you, hey? You sleep my room dees-a night, hey? He's-a one fine-a bed."

"Sleep!" Heenan retorted scornfully. "Your room? Your bed? I wouldn't bunk a sick dog where you'd slept! Tin Can an' me's for Malchuk to-night, an' we'll sleep in a white man's house, Santini. I'll drink hooch an' I'll warm myself at your fire, but sleep—yah! The pack o' yuh together might get up the nerve to take a pot shot at me if once yuh caught me sound enough asleep. Set out your slop, yuh dago

crook! Come on, Tin Can," to the wiry little man with him. "Line up."

Heenan stepped toward the bar, consciously swaggering, purposely insulting in his every movement.

"Bill!"

Heenan turned and swept the room with a quick glance. By a table in the corner, he saw Jack Burke.

"Burke!" he cried in astonishment. "Jack Burke! Why, you squizzle-eyed old-timer, I didn't know you were—Klahowyah boy. I'm plumb glad to see yuh!"

He crossed to where Burke stood and pounded him affectionately on the back. Burke wrung his hand hard and nodded to Tin Can.

"Set my hooch over here," Heenan called to Santini. "I've found a white man to drink with."

He seated himself at the table with his side partner, "Tin Can" Harris, and Burke, his big, weather-reddened face alight with pleasure.

"I didn't know you were inside, Burke," he said. "Last I heard, you were squattin' on a quartz proposition down near Juneau an' expectin' to——"

"Low-grade stuff," Burke explained briefly. "I hung onto it for five years, tryin' to raise cash to put up a small stamp mill. No use. Placer's the only thing worth while handlin' till transportation gets better in this poor man's land. On my way into Malchuk, to outfit for a prospectin' trip this comin' spring. Glad to see you an' Tin Can again, Bill."

"Glad!" Heenan echoed. "Man!"

They were contrasting types, with the common virtues of honesty and courage. Burke was the steady, solid frontiersman, who eventually hews out a home in some far land and lives to thrive in the civilization that follows him. Heenan was of those restless ones whose function it is to press ever on into the wild outlands, marking the trail that industry and comfort will follow,

but temperamentally unfit ever to stop and enjoy a lasting reward from the prosperous communities born of their explorations. He was of those who breed with the wilderness in an ecstasy of adventure to bring forth town and farm, and press ever onward to the siren call from a wilder mistress of mountain, forest, or plain.

"Get a look at this girl servin' drinks," Burke whispered guardedly. "Notice her."

The girl approached to serve their order, and as she placed the liquor on the table, Heenan studied her face. She was a girl in her late twenties, slender and comely, and as out of place in that environment as a full-blooming orchid in an Alaska blizzard. Her eyes were clear and clean; her face was soft in outline and girlish in expression; her manner was timid, and she was scared. That was the most clearly evident point about her; she was scared beyond the point of hysteria, scared into a hypnotic numbness.

"Well?" Heenan questioned, when she had moved away.

"She's in wrong here," Burke whispered. "Got her from Chatna day before yesterday, a few hours before I came. Came this far with Peters an' that Siwash woman o' his, bound for Malchuk. Paid her way with Peters an' his woman, but they went on north from here to Thumb Crick, an' this girl asked a job from Yukon Kate. She was broke. Can you beat that? Landed here at Santini's broke an' got a job! A girl like her! She thought she was goin' to wash dishes or make beds or cook or somethin' like that; but she'd no more'n got warmed up when Markham dropped in, with some o' his gang, an' Santini put her to servin' drinks. Markham made one rough play at her, an' she froze him out with a look, but it's goin' to take more'n a look to stop him next time. He's been hangin' around, stokin' him-

self with hooch to get up his courage for another play. An' she here with Santini an' Yukon Kate! I'm goin' to get her out o' this, Bill, an' gettin' her out means a fight."

"Fight!" Heenan mused, the dancing devil light in his brilliant blue eyes belying his mocking assumption of a thoughtful manner. "Fight! Where've I heard that word before? Somethin' good to eat, ain't it, Jack? Like cake or somethin'? Sure! Le's you an' me an' Tin Can order us a whole meal of it. It's the only thing I can think of, right now, that I'm real, sure 'nough hungry for."

"We'd best order it 'fore they season it up too heavy," Tin Can suggested. "If they take too long to git it ready for us, they're right liable to fix it so hot an' peppery that it won't make real good eatin'. I take notice that Santini an' Markham's been kind o' lookin' us over since we been whisper fussin' here together, an' I misdoubt but what they're makin' a good guess at our appetite."

"Will you stick, you two?" Burke asked eagerly. "Will you?"

"Hell!" Heenan swore scornfully. "Yuh been runnin' with chechahcos o' late, that yuh ask such a fool thing o' me an' Tin Can? Will we stick!"

"He ain't real right in his mind," Tin Can diagnosed Burke's case solemnly. "This bum hooch o' Santini's is gone to his head, an' he don't reckonize us, Bill. Will we stick!"

"Your dogs ready to travel, Burke?" Heenan asked.

"None with me," Burke replied. "Mushin' with just a pack an' aimin' to outfit at Malchuk."

"Ours are in the harness an' ready to go," Heenan said softly. "Tin Can an' me'll stand up the gang an' hold 'em, while you git the lady ready to mush. Time to make a play. Look at Santini an' Shark gabbin' into each

other's ears an' givin' us the eye. Ready, Tin Can?"

"Start!" Tin Can growled grumpily. "I won't be none behind when you git goin'."

Under cover of the table top, Heenan ran his hand under his parka and secured his gun.

"Reckon me an' Tin Can better be mushin'," he said loudly, that all might hear. "Got to make Malchuk to-night."

He pushed back his chair, half rising, and his right hand flashed forth from under the table, gripping a blue-barreled .44.

"Han's up!" he bellowed. "Up! High! You Kate! Up! Santini! Markham! I'll tunnel the first guy that bats a mean eye! Up!"

"Anything Bill misses I'll hit," Tin Can rasped in his high, whiny voice. "Any of yuh figure on makin' a wrong move, pray first. No chance after."

Burke stepped forward to where the girl who had been serving drinks stood with her trembling hands above her head.

"This don't go for you, miss," he said gently. "You can take your han's down. We're makin' this play for you. I know you're a decent girl, miss, an' this is a houseful o' crooks. You're in awful wrong here, an' we're goin' to make you a get-away. If you'll get ready to mush, miss, me an' my friends'll see you safe in Malchuk by night, an' put you in proper han's there."

"Don't yuh listen to 'im!" Shark Markham screamed, his face twisted with passion. "Ain't yuh better here, with a woman to look after yuh? They only want to get you away so's they —"

Heenan's huge, blunt forefinger tightened on the trigger, and the gun he held roared forth smoky flame and lead. Markham shrieked and clapped his hand to the side of his head.

"Han's up, you Shark!" Heenan called. "Up, I say! Never mind takin' 'em down to pet your right ear. There ain't much of it left to pet, but what they is can wait till we're gone for wrappin' up."

"I—didn't do nothin'," Shark whined affrightedly.

"No, an' yuh ain't goin' to say nothin'—more," Heenan added. "Talk's barred. The first one that speaks gets it."

"Will you trust us, miss?" Burke continued to the girl. "Me an' my friends are on the level, an' we'll see you safe in Malchuk to-night."

"Take me with you," the girl whimpered. "I didn't know what—what kind of a place— I thought— Oh, yes! I'll go! Take me with you."

"If you'll get your things," Burke suggested. "We'll be—"

"Go with her to get 'em together," Heenan barked. "Don't leave her out of your sight. Keep your gun ready an' your eye peeled for stray rats in some other room in the house. Hustle!"

Burke and the girl left the room together. When they returned, she was dressed for traveling and carried her pack made up. They passed out into the night, followed by Tin Can first and then Heenan, who backed to the outer door, keeping the crowd in Santini's cowed under the menace of his gun.

"Burke an' the lady'll be mushin' on for Malchuk now," he informed them, as he stood on the threshold. "Tin Can an' me, we'll set around outside, somewhere's in shootin' distance, for some part of an hour, an' the first one o' yuh pokes his nose out before we're gone— Well, I won't bother tellin' yuh. I'll show yuh. Evenin', gents. Sorry to have to be mushin' on so soon, but I'm in a real hurry. 'By, Kate. 'By, everybody. I've had a real nice time."

He backed out and slammed the door shut. Burke and Tin Can were arranging robes about the girl tucked on the sled.

"Mush for them trees ahead," Heenan whispered. "Quick! I'll hang out there a spell an' cover the dump here while you mush on slow. I'll catch up with yuh later."

Tin Can called to the dogs, and they dashed toward the birch thicket a hundred yards down the trail. They were still a few yards short of cover when a gun barked in the night behind, and Burke slipped to his knees.

"Stung me in the left arm," he reassured Heenan, as he regained his feet and dashed behind the shelter of the trees. "Nothin' much."

"Beat it with Tin Can," Heenan ordered him. "Keep goin'. I'll catch up with yuh somewhere 'twixt here an' Malchuk."

Burke muttered assent and passed from sight around a bend in the trail. Heenan waited, concealed in the shadow of the trees, watching the road house. He saw a shadowy figure emerge from the dense gloom at the rear of the house and glide toward the cover of a near-by alder clump. Chuckling, he fired. A scream echoed the report of the gun, and the shadowy figure showed prone on the snow. A moment and it half rose, dropped, rose again, and, bobbing grotesquely, gained the shelter of the house. Heenan laughed and turned his face toward Malchuk.

"There'll be no more o' that tried for the space of an hour," he chuckled confidently. "I'm safe in mushin' on."

Within the mile, he came upon Tin Can and Burke, kneeling in the snow beside the girl on the sled.

"She's fainted," Burke explained. "What—what can we do?"

"Get her into Malchuk an' into the han's o' Mother Lewis," Heenan said sharply. "She's scared sick, an' the only thing'll cure her is a dose o' pettin'

an' scoldin' from a good woman. Hi-ya! Mush, yuh Malemute mutts! Lay into that leather there, yuh bush-tailed thieves! Hike!"

The girl was desperately shaken with the shock of fright, and even under the capable care of Mother Lewis, a profane saint of a woman with the vocabulary of a mule skinner and the heart of a clean, kind child, it was a week before she was able to give an account of herself. Mother Lewis ran a hotel, and while her best was crude, it was wholesome and clean; and her best she gave to the sick girl, storming Burke angrily off the place when he guaranteed payment for the service. Heenan, Tin Can, and Burke lingered at the hotel, getting news from the sick room day by day via Mother Lewis, and speculating vainly as to the cause of the girl's presence without friends or money in Santini's place, her identity, the reason for her desperate attempt to reach Malchuk in winter.

Finally Mother Lewis came to the three, her fat, rough cheeks streaming with tears, and announced that the girl had recovered sufficiently to give an account of herself.

"Yuh can't go in to see her yet," she told them. "None of yuh can. I know you're eatin' your heart out for the chance of a look or a word with her, Jack Burke, an' it's a sorry woman I am for the word I've got to pass on to you. The poor lonely, bedeviled little kid is Louise Mawson, from a little town back in Indian, an' she's up here all by her lonesome lookin' for a lover that she ain't seen sight of for eight year nor heard from for six."

"That's bad news to you, Burke, but don't lose heart, for there's better to come—better for you, leastwise. She don't even know for sure that the man she's lookin' for is in the Territory or even still alive. His name's Tom Douglas—or it was before he left home

—an' he was cashier of a bank back yon. Somebody framed him—or so the poor girl tells it—an' he faded between suns to save himself from a trip to the pen. Three years after the lad left, the bank men found out that the boy'd been jobbed an' another was the crook. She wrote time an' again to Circle City, where she'd last heard of him, tellin' him all was right an' to come back. Never a word did she get back, an' she nigh broke her heart thinkin' he'd forgot her an' didn't want to come home.

"Then her aunt, who she was livin' with—her bein' an orphan—her aunt went an' died; an' hid away in the old lady's trunk the poor girl finds her letters to Douglas that her aunt had seen to it were never mailed, an' a lot o' letters from him askin' why don't she write, an' finally one sayin' he understands—that she's got tired waitin' for him an' that he won't bother her no more.

"She had a little money—not much it was an' that's long since gone—an' up here she come, alone an' ignorant o' the ways o' the land, to hunt for the man she loves. She's worked at this an' that an' the other in the different camps, always huntin' for Tom Douglas of some place in Alaska—maybe—who used to be in Circle City. She got word from some man that a man who might be Douglas was somewhere in the district around Malchuk, an' for Malchuk she starts.

"That's the answer to her, boys. It's no nice hearin' for you, Jack Burke, but it's the truth as she give it to me. But stick around, Jack. You're a square man an' a sober one, an' I know you'd be good to a woman you feel toward as yuh do toward her. The poor little mite of a girl's got into my heart since I been doin' for her this week, an' I'd see her safe with a good man's name for her own. Tom Douglas may be alive or dead or good or bad or mar-

ried or single. We don't know, an' until we find out, do yuh keep your chips on the table an' play the game, for you've a chance for the pot yet."

"I'll sit in the game till the hand's played out," Burke answered, flushing darkly. "If the man she—she come up here for is alive, I'd like to find him for her. I'd like to do that for her, if it's to be done. If he ain't alive —"

"Nine chances to ten he ain't," Heenan put in. "If he's in Malchuk, we'll find him between the three of us, an' —Burke, old-timer—here's hopin' we don't."

Burke sat in his room, whistling gayly, when Heenan entered, sullen and abashed.

"I've found him," he said shortly.

Burke paled, and a mist of age not created of years filmed his eyes.

"I—I'd begun to think he'd not be found," he said huskily. "A month now an' no word— God! And to-day she all but promised me that—that some time—if he wasn't found— Well! Tell me."

"The man she knows as Douglas," Heenan said slowly, "is 'Siwash Tom.'"

Burke rose, the veins of his face and neck distended from the pressure of his anger.

"Him—that—that married that Siwash-Russian breed girl?" he questioned. "Him that lived out on Soper Crick there with—"

"The same," Heenan said. "Siwash Tom is Tom Douglas."

"I'll kill him!" Burke burst forth. "Him married to a Siwash when a girl like Louise— That Indian he was tied up with died, didn't she? Yes! Then the dog's free to—to— If he could meet her an' talk soft an' explain— I'll kill him, damn him! I'll kill him!"

Heenan gripped the raging man by

the shoulders and slowly forced him back onto the bunk.

"Listen to me, Burke," he ordered sternly. "You'll have no hand in this. Yuh ain't fit for the job. What's done I'll do, an' I'll do right. There'll be no killin' if he don't show fight. If he's got to be drove away for the good o' the girl—an' I reckon, from all I know of him, he has—I'll do the drivin' an' see to it that you're left a free field. I can handle this better'n you, old-timer. Will yuh leave it to me? Will yuh win or lose by what I do as I see the right of it for Miss Mawson first, you next, an' him third? Will yuh?"

Burke hid his face in his arms and grunted assent.

"I'm hard hit, Bill," he confessed in a muffled, shaky voice. "You're right. I ain't fit to handle this. You're a white man, Heenan. You'll do the thing I'd do if I was fit. It's up to you."

"Win or lose as I play the hand?" Heenan pressed him gently.

"Win or lose as you play it," Burke groaned, "an' never a thought of a kick, Bill. Deal 'em square an' I'll stand by the cards that fall to me!"

He was a young man, but his large dark eyes were dull with ashes from the fire of a hope that was dead, and his shoulders were a-droop from the weight of a living sorrow. A knock on the door interrupted him as he stood by the stove in his cabin on Soper Creek preparing supper. He called out an invitation to enter and nodded as Heenan came in.

"Your name Douglas?" Heenan asked bluntly.

The old-young man started, paled, and then smiled wearily, contemptuously.

"Officer, are you, Heenan? You're the last man I'd have suspected. No disgrace in being an officer of the law, of course, but somehow—— Yes. I'm

Tom Douglas, and I'm wanted in Indiana for embezzlement."

"No, you're not," Heenan contradicted him. "You were cleared o' that charge five years ago, an' the man who took the money's done his time for it."

"Refiner!" Douglas shouted. "The cashier! They got him? He was the one?"

"He confessed and cleared you," Heenan assured him. "You're not wanted in Indiana, but yuh are wanted in Alaska—by me—to answer some questions. Louise Mawson's in Malchuk, lookin' for yuh."

Douglas swayed as if from a mortal slash of angry steel.

"She's here lookin' for yuh—an' you're a squaw man," Heenan went on relentlessly. "She stuck by yuh through hell an' high water, an' you went an' tied yourself up to a Siwash-Russian breed while she was waitin'. You're my idea o' nothin' worth while for a girl like her to come all this way lookin' for!"

Douglas groaned deep in his throat and sank trembling into a chair.

"I don't—understand," he muttered, pressing his throbbing temples with his clenched fists. "I wrote her—— Never a word—— She didn't—— No answer——"

"I know somethin' about that," Heenan admitted. "Your letters never got to her, an' the ones she wrote to you were never mailed, but——"

"Her aunt?" Douglas guessed.

"Yeh. But that's got nothin' to do with it. This breed girl yuh took up with's dead, ain't she?"

"Yes."

"An' that's got nothin' to do with it, either. How come yuh to sink so low yuh take up with such as her?"

Douglas raised his head and looked steadily at Heenan.

"She was my wife and she's dead," he said firmly. "She was a breed, but she was as good as I ever was, and bet-

ter. She was a square, clean girl, and, damn you, Heenan, there'll be no talk of my sinking when I married her! She found me stiff with frost in the snow on the Lamak Trail, and she packed me to her cabin and nursed me for months. She saved me from death first and mutilation afterward, for if it hadn't been for her nursing, I'd have lost both arms, at the least. I thought Louise was—that it was all over. I was a derelict cast up on this far beach of wilderness for life and—I married the breed that saved me. I married her and now— Louise in Malchuk! Oh, my God! I can't—I can't face her, Heenan! I can't!"

"Best not," Heenan agreed. "She don't know I've located yuh. You're known hereabouts as 'Siwash Tom,' an' she's lookin' for Tom Douglas. I don't see no reason for tellin' her that I've found yuh, an'—the out trails are open to a man with two good feet, son."

"I'll go," Douglas muttered agreement to the suggestion of flight. "She—she's all right, Heenan? If I leave, she'll get home all right and be—"

"Not so sure she'll go home. Jack Burke's been seein' some of her lately, an' I reckon, if she was real sure she'd never find yuh—if I could take her some fake story that yuh was dead, say—I reckon she'd find a good home with Burke an' be as happy as she ever can be without yuh. Burke's a better man than most. He's steady, an' he'll do well by her. I reckon it'll be best that way."

"I'll be out o' the district by sunrise," Douglas promised in a monotonous voice. "Tell her any story you please about my death. I'll never turn up, Bill."

"That's talkin'!" Heenan approved. "Couldn't very well go to her with your record as a squaw man. She might forgive yuh an' all that, but it'd be tough. Burke'll make her a good man. Course they'll have to make their home here

in the Territory, an' never take a chance on goin' outside. That wife o' his back in the State o' Maine—"

"What?" Douglas shouted.

"It's all right," Heenan soothed him. "Burke's got a wife back there that he ain't seen for fifteen years or more. She don't even know where he's at—don't know whether he's in Alaska or Mexico. As long as he lives up here—"

"You mean he's going to trick Louise into—"

"Don't get all het up," Heenan advised. "She'll never know the difference, an' Burke'll play square—"

"That's what you wanted me to leave for!" Douglas cried. He crossed the room and threw on his Mackinaw and cap. "Get out of my way!" he shouted. "If I do nothing else, I'm going to see her safe on her way home and out of the hands of such as you! I'll own up to everything and take the shame, but I'll see her safe on her way back!"

Heenan's right hand flashed out, gripping a gun.

"Stop!" he commanded. "Burke's my friend, an' he's goin' to have all the best o' this. Make one more move an' I won't have to lie when I tell her you're dead."

"I'm going to Malchuk and tell Louise the truth," Douglas said steadily. "You've got the drop on me, but you'll have to kill to stop me. I'm going."

"I'll shoot yuh if yuh start," Heenan promised grimly.

Douglas muttered an imprecation and sprang. Heenan fired—and missed. They met and clinched. The fight was savage, but short. Douglas was willing, but he was no match for Heenan. Within the space of a minute, he lay helpless on his back, with Heenan kneeling triumphant on his chest.

With his enemy helpless under him, Heenan relaxed his grip and rose to his feet.

"Get up!" he commanded Douglas. Douglas struggled shakily to his feet. "I lied about Burke," Heenan confessed shortly. "He has no wife an' never had one. I'm thinkin' now that he never will have one. Come on."

"You lied about Burke?" Douglas repeated wonderingly. "What do you mean? Where are you going?"

"With you to Malchuk," Heenan growled.

"But you said—— You tried to kill me when——"

"Tried!" Heenan snapped. "Tried! Think I'd 'a' missed if I hadn't 'a' shot wild a-purpose? You win, son. I dealt 'em square, an' you win. If yuh hadn't 'a' stood up for the breed girl that saved your life, if yuh hadn't tried to go through when I had my gun on yuh an' yuh thought we were framin' Miss Mawson for a crooked marriage—— Burke's my friend, but yuh win. That girl's eatin' her heart out for yuh, an' you're as near fit to have her as a man can be. Yuh win!"

Heenan entered Burke's room and dropped a heavy hand on his friend's shoulder.

"Yuh lose, Burke," he told him bluntly.

Burke shivered and his knees bent slightly. Then he straightened up and stood quiet.

"Is he—a regular guy—this Douglas?" he asked.

"Good as they make 'em," Heenan answered. "I just left 'em together. He'd told her his story, an' she—she was layin' in his arms, Jack—an'an' her face—— Yuh lose! That's all. I dealt 'em square—an' yuh lose."

"I'm glad he's a man," Burke said, and his voice shook in spite of his effort for control. "That—Mackenzie River country—Bill—think I'll—try that—in the spring—when the ice—goes——"

Heenan gripped him by the shoulders and sank his big fingers deep in the man's quivering flesh.

"Let go, Jack," he said softly. "Needn't be ashamed in front o' me. Let her rip."

Burke's head drooped, and his body shook. Heenan held him tight while the agony of the man's renunciation voiced itself in dry, raspy, flesh-rending sobs.



AN APRIL MORNING

OH, I am not drunk with wine, sir, I am not drunk with wine,

But I've walked a twinkling garden where the wet, red roses twine,
And I've wandered tangled pathways where the sunbeams sprinkle through.
Oh, I am not drunk with wine, sir—I am drunk with April dew.

Oh, I am not drunk with wine, sir, I am not drunk with wine,

But I've tripped a flashing meadow where the laughing jonquils shine,
And I've breathed the fragrant sunlight from the dancing yellow hills.
Oh, I am not drunk with wine, sir—I am drunk with daffodils.

Oh, I am not drunk with wine, sir, I am not drunk with wine,

But I've heard a twittered love song from a morning-glory vine,
And I've learned a golden lyric from a honey-laden bee.
Oh, I am not drunk with wine, sir—I am drunk with melody.

PERRIN HOLMES LOWREY.



Blind Man's Buff

By Bonnie Ginger

Author of "About One Out of Four,"
"That Morbid Whale," etc.



IT happened very simply. Elliot Hunter, being condemned to blindness for two years, advertised for a young man to come and read aloud. Seventeen young men answered the ad, and also one young woman.

The young woman got the job. She was Mary Dawson.

"You see," she explained to Miss Arke, Hunter's librarian and secretary, "I must get something to do, and I wasn't taught a trade, I'm sorry to say. There was nothing in the 'Female Wanted,' so I tried the 'Males.'"

Miss Arke thought of the seventeen young men whom Hunter had courteously sent back into the void whence they had come, and, rumpling her gray hair, she considered this female variation. The result was that she sent the girl in to him. He sent her out engaged.

"It was so good of you to get him to see me, Miss Arke."

"Oh, no. I rather thought you'd do. Well, then, as to the hours. Mornings, ten to twelve; afternoons, four to five." Miss Arke used conversational commas and semicolons. "Mostly magazines. I run over the papers to him myself. At eleven each morning, coffee will come in. Mr. Hunter likes it then, and you may find it helps your voice."

"It all seems to be made very easy and—"

Miss Arke again rumpled her hair. She had a way of heading off gratitude.

"The salary will be twenty dollars a week."

"Oh, but that's too much!"

Miss Arke looked at her a moment, and then said, very definitely:

"No. Then you will begin this afternoon?"

"I shall be very glad."

The girl came back promptly at four. The exactitude pleased Miss Arke. She asked Hunter that night if Miss Dawson were satisfactory.

"Satisfactory? Oh, yes, quite."

"She reads well?"

"Like print. She takes the place of my own eyes. You're a jewel, Miss Arke."

"Oh——" demurred the secretary, hurriedly disclaiming compliment.

Hunter repeated, "You are a jewel!" and this time she was submissively silent. In fact, she was smiling.

So was Mary Dawson, then on the way home.

"Initiative pays! Yes, twenty dollars a week! From penury to plenty, from prairie to palace, all for answering an ad! Farewell, stale buns kept in a suit case! Farewell, little bakery around the corner! Once again I shall eat with a cloth napkin—maybe even a dry one—and pay a ten-cent tip. Oh,

to have again the respect of waiters! How will it feel?"

And to solve that problem, she turned into a certain restaurant and spent sixty cents as carelessly as you or I would spend ten dollars. But she figured, too, that food would strengthen her voice.

Before she went to work next day, she took counsel with herself.

"Now, that secretary dotes on efficiency. I must be very businesslike. A girl who has lost her income had better learn business methods. Then, too, I must be very impersonal. The very fact that this Hunter advertised for a man shows that he was afraid of a woman, because women are always personal. And he's in no position for that now. He probably feels he's at a disadvantage. Well, every act of mine must be a reassurance to him. I must study to be like Miss Arke."

She needed an example, in fact. She had, before this, tried being impersonal with people, both men and women, and never with notable success; not only because people were absorbingly interesting to her, but because her own personality was somehow not the sort that deadens other people's curiosity. But she usually blamed herself. "I haven't the knack of reserve," she lamented. Therefore, she must cultivate it all the more earnestly since she had entered into business relations that peculiarly demanded this virtue.

Her first week was so completely successful in this respect that she even gloated a little over it. She saw, too, that Miss Arke was gratified. In the first place, she was always punctual. She always left her things neatly on a certain chair in the library, where the secretary liked to receive her. In the study, where she did her reading, she was a clockwork of routine. A pile of magazines always stood on the big table, and the contents table of each was marked by Miss Arke according

to the articles Hunter would be likeliest to want. From these he made selection. Then she read till coffee came in. Usually Miss Arke dropped in then, and they all talked of what had been read. Within ten or fifteen minutes, Mary resumed the article. A clock always struck twelve, and she stopped. That was Hunter's wish, of course. He wouldn't let her work overtime.

The second week went by in the same manner. Her gratification was tinged with surprise. She recalled no instance in all her life when daily contact had failed to bring about some personal atmosphere. Indeed, at the end of the week she was just a little disconcerted.

"I builded better than I knew, evidently. They aren't eaten up with curiosity. Possibly, too, I overestimated my own individuality, or else even a blind man would take some particle of interest in me. But of course it's very much better this way."

She knew this, because she was beginning to be fairly interested in Hunter. He piqued her curiosity. She kept it down as well as she could, however, partly from pride, partly because he was blind and it didn't seem fair to study him over the top of the page as she read. Certain things were plain enough—his wealth, his good looks, his strong body—but there were other things it was very hard not to wonder about. That is, he was the sort of man that sets a woman to speculating. But so does almost any man who is unmarried at forty.

The first morning in the third week had begun.

Mary was seated by the pile of magazines, reading out the titles for his selections. But to-day he was not, as he usually was, seated in his big chair by the table. He was slowly pacing the rug. Suddenly he asked her to stop.

"I don't feel like hearing world problems to-day."

"Oh? Would you prefer the novel?"

"Novel? No. That's worse. Miss Dawson, my secretary tells me you live rather near."

"I? Oh, yes; within a mile, I should say."

"Do you walk sometimes?"

"No, always."

"Always? Do you? Why?"

"Why, it's part of the fun."

"Fun? What fun?"

"The reading. Oh, I mean— Well, yes—it *is* fun to read aloud. It's fortunate, isn't it, having work one likes?"

"I suppose so." He started for the table, but lost his bearings. "Let's see. Just where is it?"

"Over here, where I am—I mean my voice."

He gained the chair. But immediately he sat forward.

"Miss Dawson, do you mind telling me about that walk?"

She was too surprised to answer at once.

"See here! A moment ago you gave yourself a personality, and then you took it away. You said, 'Where I am,' and then you changed it to your voice. I know where your voice is, but I don't know where you are. Now—tell me—why mayn't I know?"

"I'm afraid I don't understand——" she faltered.

"Ah? Well, you see, a man in my position develops an imagination. Now, when you come here of a morning, it's as if the door opened an instant on the big world you've walked through here, and its contacts—they stick out on you like nettles—no, like bubbles in champagne. I picture you running over in sparkles. And then the door shuts, and here you are, the young lady who comes to read. The effervescence is corked up. But why?"

Mary had gradually been flushing un-

til now she was scarlet, for she was a little angry. "Since when did you regard me as a unit?" she thought. "And now you expect me to unfold like a flower in the sun!" But she said nothing, and that was perhaps a mistake, for her silence brought out in him certain powers of persuasion—powers she had half guessed he possessed; for instance, the wheedling tones he suddenly used.

"Miss Dawson, chuck the articles and talk to me!"

"But Mr. Hunter!"

She made it just like Miss Arke's voice. Next instant he had sprawled half across the table.

"Will you? Will you?" He waited. All at once she laughed. So did he. "There! Thanks! That laugh was a whole dose of daylight! Now! The walk—come!" And he reached out and got the magazine from her. Well, what could she do?

It was full noon when they broke off the conversation.

In the library, she had just put on her things when she saw Miss Arke unaccountably hanging about. All at once the secretary, with the awkwardness of a schoolboy, floundered forward and thrust into the girl's hand a little nosegay from the conservatory—strange little testimonial from one who had never, somehow, suggested flowers.

"I—thought they were your color."

"Oh, thank you! How dear of you!"

"Oh, no." And Miss Arke rumbled her hair and marched away.

All the way home Mary admonished herself.

"Now, Mary, remember! Business methods *only*! No more chats. Be firm. He can beguile, but only if you're stupid. And you have more pride, surely, than to wag your tail just because he whistled!"

Nevertheless, on the very next morning they had a preliminary chat. It was not long, but they had it. And

again in the afternoon. And after that—always, morning *and* afternoon.

Now, under her skin, Mary was a serious girl, feeling intensely about numbers of things. If he would talk of these, very well. They were the things he seemed to want her to read. This hope made her lenient.

But as the days went on, she began to see that his interests were dual and opposite. He would humor her in the serious line, but invariably he would slip, by clever, beguiling ways peculiarly his own, into the personal—and that was the irrelevant. He seemed to be trying to turn her away to the very things that she had thought him most particular not to approach, and that, the more she saw of him, the more she determined must be kept down. If he had taken her serious self seriously, it would have been different. The other way was not flattering—from him.

So presently the chats became, not arguments, but skirmishes.

One morning Miss Arke came in at coffee time, bringing a magazine.

"I've just found something by your friend, Dian Holland," she said.

Hunter looked pleased.

"Oh! Good! Miss Dawson can read it to us. She's just this minute been scolding me for not having serious thoughts. Dian Holland is decidedly serious. Maybe you know her stuff, Miss Dawson?"

"Dian—Holland? Why, it seems to me——"

"Oh, it's very occasional stuff, but bully. Essays."

"Essays!"

"Oh, that doesn't damn them. I believe you'll like her."

"A woman?"

"Yes, and really not boring. Quite the contrary. Come, read it to us—and Miss Arke will stay."

"Well, if you wish——" And Mary took the magazine. The article was

called "A Ramble In Roofland." She began.

At the end of the first few paragraphs, Hunter interrupted.

"Don't you rather like her style?"

"Why, yes. Yes, I *do*. She's really quite good, isn't she?"

"Yes. Stimulating. Loves her city. Wants people to get her feeling about it. A human girl, going around Harounishly, but finding things that somehow belong to *you*, that you suddenly feel responsible for, though she's too adroit to say so."

Mary continued the essay. She finished it in quite a glow.

"Thanks," said Miss Arke, leaving. "I think it's her best."

When she had gone, Hunter said:

"Well, wasn't it rather noble of me to let you read the very thing that convicts me of the very vices you deplored?"

"But you don't feel convicted. Or, if you do, you don't mind."

"Then why did I want to hear the essay?"

"I can't possibly imagine. When I've tried to tell you the very same things, you've only laughed. True, this Dian What's-her-name is a writer. She says things better than I——"

"Come, now! That's a bit of a dig."

"Yes. But I'm a mite piqued. I feel just as this Dian feels about things, but you don't take *my* ideas seriously."

"Oh, yes, I do."

Mary stiffened a little, and resumed the article she had been reading when Miss Arke came in. At twelve her departure was a little more abrupt than usual.

She was really piqued.

She knew she attracted him, but how little gratification she felt! Her real self, the serious self, he only laughed away. He wanted the amusing, the vivacious Mary Dawson; it was a whim of his to be attracted by her in that lighter way, an indulgence he allowed himself

deliberately, perhaps. She saw that he had always had pretty much what he wanted. Well, now he would feel all the more entitled to his fancies, and she was one of them. He kept his bigger self for the Dian Hollands, people who could impress him with the written, the printed word.

"Dian Holland, I'm jealous of you," she said. And then she took another view. "But if he likes your stuff, there is something in him, and I'm glad of that. Perhaps I can reach him in the same way, if I only manage right. But what a ninny I am, to care who reaches him, or to think anything about him! He cares nothing about me, except to be entertained."

She tried, therefore, to slip back into her first, the businesslike, manner. But who should add to the difficulties of that but the secretary, Miss Arke?

Miss Arke had developed a habit of waylaying the girl on all sorts of odd excuses, if only for an instant, and the nosegay was now almost a daily incident. In short, it looked very much as if Miss Arke liked her. And Mary liked the odd, rumple-haired woman, whose *brusqueries* hid a tender and probably a mothering heart. But if she tried to respond to this shy, awkward fondness, the secretary always grew more brusque and hurried away.

It was about two weeks later that another essay of Dian Holland's appeared in another magazine.

It was Mary herself who discovered it at a bookstall, and she brought the volume to Hunter's study. He was delighted, and sent for Miss Arke to hear it read. It was better even than "A Ramble In Roofland," and Mary read it enthusiastically. It said so many things that she felt very eager about and that she thought would bring a response from him, give him that feeling of responsibility he said Dian Holland could inspire.

He listened very attentively, but he

said nothing. It was Miss Arke who praised the essay. And when Miss Arke had gone, he suddenly dismissed, not only the essay, but the entire morning's reading, in favor of a ride in his car. He invited Mary to go, too.

"A ride?" stammered Mary.

"Yes. I go sometimes, properly bandaged."

"But——"

"But let's go! Don't you like to ride about town?"

"Yes, sir. But some one else, some of your friends——"

He drew back, frowning.

"Oh! My friends! You differentiate yourself from my friends? You've done that lately. I suppose it goes with the 'sir.'"

"I suppose we're going to have another scene," she said.

"Not at all. I thought you'd like the idea of a ride. I thought we'd go about the streets and you'd tell me what you saw. Your own streets, you know, that you used to talk about when we used to have human converse. See here, what have I done to make you close up like a clam?"

"I haven't closed up. And, Mr. Hunter, let me ask why you don't want me to read any more? Do I read badly? Are you disappointed? And would you like to get some one else in my place?"

A book clattering on the table disrupted this question.

"That's sensible! To take your place! If that's what a harmless suggestion does to you, I'll never breathe another word that isn't down in the schoolroom rules!"

"And," she flared, "I don't like it when you fly out at me and call me schooly, just because I ask to get on with the work I come here to do!"

"That's definite, anyhow."

He sat down angrily. For a moment she pulled the magazines about the table ostentatiously.

"I'm very rude," she said at last.

"Yes, you are. You read an essay that fires me to go out and get the feel of my fellows, to rub off some of the selfishness— But what's the use? You came to read!"

"Did you—did you really feel that way?" she asked, low.

"Yes. But anything that interrupts your work——"

"I'm sorry. I'll go."

He chuckled. Then he reached out and got her hand, the hand that fidgeted near him among the papers.

Two or three days later, he showed her a letter he had received in the morning's post.

"Guess who wrote this?" he asked.

She stared at the large envelope with its big, plain writing—"Elliot M. Hunter, Esquire." She shook her head.

"How should I guess?"

"It's from Dian Holland."

Mary whistled.

"Dian Holland! Well! Then you must have written to her."

"I did. I thanked her for the pleasure her last essay gave me."

"Oh." Mary stared at him. "Well—was she pleased?"

"Read and see."

She read the answer.

"Mm. Very proper, I should say. A nice, scholarly little reply."

"Oh, now, I thought it rather friendly and chatty. In fact, I'm going to write again."

"Oh, are you? But how did you write the first?"

"Miss Arke took it down. She likes D. H., too, you know. But do you know, I rather thought you'd not mind jotting down my answer yourself? It's not your work, of course, but you're the third of our little triangle of D. H. admirers. Would you mind?"

"Why, I'd love it. I'm so glad you thought of it."

"Are you?—Then tell me—— She won't mind, will she, if I—— In fact,

I'm going to propose to her that we—correspond."

"Correspond! Good gracious!"

"But why not? I shall tell her I'm blind, that I can't come to see her or ask her to see me—she's a busy woman, of course—and it will be such a kindness in her, et cetera. You'll help me compose it. I want it to be quite right. Suppose we get it up now, so it can be mailed?"

"Well, if you wish. But where will you send it? She hasn't put any address——"

"I noticed that. But it can go to her publisher, as the other did. All the better for a writer, to have letters from her public. I'll begin now, if you're sure you don't mind."

She took down his words, and it was well that he could not see her expression. For she was thinking that he reminded her of a certain young mendicant on a certain street corner, who won his pennies, not by tapping the pavement and adjuring the passers, but just by the mere fact of his being there, in that condition. Hunter had that same manner of being, not so much suppliant as just boundlessly receptive. And somehow it's the thing that makes people give.

Well, what Mary expected happened. Dian Holland could not resist him. She assented to his proposal. The correspondence began.

It was Mary who handled it for him, reading Dian's letters, which Miss Arke set aside, and transcribing the answers, which Miss Arke mailed. Whatever the secretary may have thought of the matter, she was too businesslike to betray it. Probably she regarded it as one of his mere, and justifiable, pastimes. That was how Mary tried to regard it.

His first letters were merely whimsical experiments, as he felt his way. But the essayist answered pretty seriously—though rather promptly. Mary

watched him carefully. "For he'll get tired of that," she thought. But the contrary happened. He warmed up to the thing, dropped the tone of the amiable beggar and the attractive philanderer, and presently outdid Dian herself in the earnestness of his tone.

One day she had finished one of his answers just as he had been called to the phone. She looked at him as he sat there, his features lighted by the conversation he was holding with his friend. Then she glanced at the pages she had just written, and her face slowly flushed. She was conscious of many emotions at war in herself—yes, strong enough to be at war.

She was glad for this letter. It showed her a man surely not empty, not given over to selfishness; here was a long confession of delinquency, of lament for idle years and lost opportunities, but also an almost poignant plea for help, for stimulation, for whatever would rouse him to escape. Now were two blind years ahead; he had entered them thinking chiefly of how he could endure them. But suppose he could use them—make them a preface for an active, useful life when he "came out from the bandages?" Could Dian Holland spur him to a thing like that?

Then he had the stuff in him! She looked again at him, and a thrill went through her, unaccountably triumphant. Then the flush came back to her face, and an expression unlike any of her proper expressions. It was spiteful.

She was jealous of Dian Holland, spitefully, cattily jealous.

She pictured Dian getting this letter and answering it, helping him, urging him, spurring him, having part in his reclamation. And all the while Mary Dawson, who was just as much concerned about him, had no influence over him; he refused to take *her* seriously, absolutely refused.

Well, even so, he was not the only one who had a dual nature, or who could set out to make the right nature win. She must put down the jealousy. She must help Dian to make him win.

But there was some one besides Mary who was jealous for Mary.

It was Miss Arke.

Miss Arke had grown increasingly fond of the girl. More than that, she was very fond of Hunter, and perhaps she had conceived a little romance for those two. Mary did not know that, but she did see that Miss Arke liked her and resented the time Hunter gave to his fantastic correspondence.

One day she said, being in the study at coffee time:

"Do you think you ought to take up so much of this Dian Holland's time? How can she do her essays and still write these long letters to you?"

"Oh, a writer is already in harness. It's probably a diversion for her," he had the audacity to say.

"It seems to be growing into a habit," Miss Arke replied rather tartly. "But perhaps she regards her letters as copy, to be published some day. They say writers do that."

Hunter laughed, but he flushed, too. And that very day he asked Mary to dash off a note for him to the essayist. In it he asked her if he interfered with her work; perhaps, out of her good nature, she had given him some of the time and strength that belonged to her essays. He couldn't bear to think he was stealing time that belonged to her public.

To which Dian replied that, on the contrary, she had grown almost dependent upon that correspondence, and that any interruption would be a real loss.

In short, it looked a little like a crush on Dian's part.

"Now he'll get fed up on it," thought Mary. And, indeed, his next two or three letters were shorter than usual.

She gloated over this, maliciously. At the same time, she had a pang of fear. It was better for Dian to keep him to the pitch of ambition than for the ambition to wane.

However, if he wrote shorter letters, he read—or had Mary read—more and more serious books and articles. In fact, he was not only reading now; he was studying.

All this time, Mary had been maintaining her dignity carefully. That was never easy, but all at once it became even harder. He began, as it were, to use her as a reaction. He often called her by her first name, and she had stopped trying to prevent him. He redoubled his blandishments and, in spite of her reserve, he could nearly always get around her with his ways. He would get her to come near him, simply that he might touch her. One day he somehow beguiled her into letting him pass his hands over her face, to "see" her.

"We blind men have to do the best we can," he said, laughing, "but the first attempts don't get very far. What color are your eyes, Mary?"

"Clay colored," she said, trying to get free.

He held her by the hand.

"Clay— Oh, rot! Miss Arke says they're starry gray."

"Very well, they're starry gray."

"And your hair?" He felt it.

"Ask Miss Arke."

"Fortunately, I did ask her. She says it's like a russet wood in Maine, in October."

"Miss Arke said that?"

"Well, I built it up out of what she did say. Mary—"

He drew her toward him unexpectedly—and unexpectedly she slipped away. He had evidently been about to kiss her!

She was very angry. She was always angry when she had let him entice her like that. The thought of Dian

Holland would leap up. He wouldn't have tried that with *her*!

"I shall leave!" she thought. "I shall have to! Oh, why did I ever come? If I hadn't needed the money so!"

But she had needed it, and she still needed it. That was why, she told herself, she kept on staying even now, when every day brought out in him more of this will to attract her, to amuse himself at her expense. She ought to despise him. At times she did.

But something softened her. It was his renewal of the long letters to Dian. And the reason they softened her was that in them he seemed to be trying to say that his struggle was harder. In short, there was something he could not tell even Dian—not in letters. Perhaps it was because he wanted to tell her in person that one day he wrote and asked if he and she might not really meet.

The reply to that was several days in coming. Then Dian begged that he wouldn't ask that of her.

"It might spoil things," she said. "Let us go on this way—our letters across the intervening void, two personalities meeting, illuminating the darkness a moment, shaking hands as people do in the street, and going on."

"Her style's suffering," thought Mary. "That's rotten stuff. I could do better myself."

She sat and looked at Hunter, to see how he took his defeat. She might have known he would not consider it defeat.

"I say, Mary," he said, after some minutes of thinking, "I wonder if I could ask you to do something really—well, more tremendous than all the rest you've done?"

"I'm sure you could ask," she said dryly.

He ignored the innuendo, and came at her across the table in that coaxing way of his.

"It's cheeky, I know, but you *are* so wonderful! And you do admire Dian, too. Would you—*would* you go yourself to see her—I mean, would you go from me?"

Mary flushed painfully. It was a full minute before she spoke.

"Would I go? But why? Why? What good would it do? I mean, even if she received me. You're impossible!"

"Not at all. I just can't give up the idea of—— You could persuade her to meet me. I know you could. I know you——"

"But I don't want to! She says she doesn't wish—— I should think you'd have more pride!"

"Pride? Pooh! I want to meet her. And she'd listen to you."

He took Mary's hand. Whenever he did that, she felt her resistance weakening, but now all at once she deliberately gave up all thought of resisting him. She even let him go on coaxing, enticing, and she purposely listened. He came nearer. She could feel the tremble of her hand in his. But she gazed at him steadily. If he could have seen her, he would have known that she was reaching some great and difficult decision. She was pale.

"Well," she said at last, but calmly, "I'll do it."

"Mary!" His whole face was full of a sort of gloating mirth. "I knew it! I knew! Oh, you are a wonder! And when," he added, dropping his voice to a great gentleness, "will you go?"

"This afternoon. But," she added quickly, as he tried to get her other hand, "on condition that you let me finish my reading—uninterrupted."

"I'll do anything you say! Anything—Mary!"

She took up the book she had been reading and continued where she had left off. But her color did not return. And while she read, she was constantly

looking over the top of the page at him. Sometimes there was a sudden lump in her throat that made it hard to go on.

The clock struck twelve. She got up, setting aside the book, and cleared her throat.

"Well," she said, "good-by."

He detected nothing strange in her tones.

"Au revoir, wonderful Mary! You'll have news for me before we meet again!"

She looked down at him.

"Yes. News." And, turning abruptly, she left the study.

Miss Arke was in the library.

"Why, Miss Dawson!" she said, startled out of her usual poise. There were tears in Mary's eyes.

"Oh," said Mary, laughing a little, "I couldn't help it. He's ever so nice and I'm rather silly about people who are nice. I feel the same about you, too, Miss Arke. I shall miss you, you see."

"You—you will miss me? My dear girl, what do you mean?"

"I'm leaving. I'm not coming back."

Miss Arke simply could not speak. Mary went to her and put her arm about her.

"Yes. I stayed longer than I meant. I do hate to go. But I must."

Still the secretary could not grasp her meaning. Mary tried to explain, but it was difficult, for, after all, she could not explain in the least. And at last she gave up trying.

"Oh, dear Miss Arke, just don't ask me now! Maybe later I can tell you—but I can't just now. And I have the note to write before I go."

"The note?" Miss Arke was for once utterly and openly at sea, rudderless and agitated.

"Yes. You see, he doesn't know yet. I didn't tell him I'm going. That's why—— And you'll give him the note

after I've left. Not till then, please. Please!"

And while Miss Arke stood helpless, Mary sat down and wrote the short note, his "news."

What was her surprise to hear Miss Arke suddenly laugh—nervously, but still triumphantly.

"He'll not let you leave! He simply won't allow it!"

Mary said nothing. It would have done no good. Besides, she understood something of that faith in their employer—in his ability to get what he wanted and to keep it if he wished. Only, this time he would fail. This time he would fail.

And so she left the big house that had held her job for so many weeks.

"And now," she thought, "now for Dian Holland!"

Nor did she wait till afternoon—she went at once.

It was about an hour later. Mary and her rival had been arguing this matter of Elliot Hunter, and so far they had got nowhere, being equally obstinate. Now they were getting a little heated.

"But," said the essayist, "what you ask is really too preposterous. To give up this splendid friendship with a man who tells me he needs me——"

"Oh!" cried Mary impatiently. "The egotism of these writers! Needs you! Of course I'm jealous of you, I admit that."

"Of course," smiled Dian. "I dare say you hate me."

"I do, often. Your essays and uplift letters—— And all the time I was there in his study, but he never saw that I liked the same things. I attracted him *physically*. Only that!"

"But that's a lot. It's half. I wish I could say it! I'm jolly well jealous of you, too! But I'll not see him. I have this intellectual intimacy with him, and I shan't give it up."

"But you've got to! Can't you see? I've left his employment, and you must do your share. The letters can't go on. They can't. It's not fair, or honest—or even decent! And at least do think of your own self-respect!"

"Bother my self-respect!" said Dian.

Once more Mary was beginning her plea when there came a knock at the door.

"Come in," she called, and the door opened, and the little house girl ushered in two callers.

Mary rose, thunderstruck.

The visitors were Hunter and Miss Arke.

Miss Arke was beaming. She came across the little room to Mary.

"You see! I told you!" Then she turned to Hunter. "But Dian Holland isn't here! My dear, he said the writer would be here. Is that so? Is she coming?"

"She's here," said Hunter calmly.

"Why, no. Only Miss Dawson—she's alone. There's no one else!"

"Oh. But never mind. It's all the same to me. How do you do, Dian Dawson? Or is it Mary Holland? But really, it doesn't make any difference to me." And he held out his hand to Mary Dian Dawson Holland.

Mary stood quite speechless, but Miss Arke was astounded into exclamation.

"Miss Dawson! You don't mean that you—that you are——"

"Yes!" cried Mary. "I am! I am! Oh, how in the world did you guess?" She turned her distressed face to Hunter. He was standing calmly by the table. "How did you—— And how long——"

"I didn't guess. I knew—from the first, the very first."

"What?" said Miss Arke sharply.

"You didn't know," he said to Mary, "that I, too, have a pen name? Great guns, I do verses! The *Courier* prints them——"

"The *Courier*!"

"And one day Mr. Hornblow was at the house and——"

"He told! He betrayed my secret!"

"Ah, but quite accidentally. Truly. You must believe that."

Mary sank down, covering her face..

"Oh, what did you think of me? What did you think?"

"I didn't think—I mean, any more than I could help. I tried to respect your—secret." She said nothing, and he added gently, "You see, you're rather keen on dual personalities."

That stung her.

"I needed the work—I mean the money! Yes, the money! How could I explain that—if you knew I was—— Oh, I tried to explain, but I couldn't! I mean, that day Miss Arke brought in the essay. I'm a beginner, and I'm so slow—so very slow. It was an honest need. It was, it was!"

Miss Arke suddenly achieved, for her, a miracle. She became tactful.

"My dear, we understand. Of course I'm exceedingly astonished—but I'm glad, too. No one else could have done it so well as you—the reading. And we've liked you so—and you'll come back, won't you? Mr. Hunter, stay and persuade her to come back. I must run along to do an errand— that's why I came. I have to see some one who lives near. And you'll go back in the car with Mr. Hunter? Of course you will." And the secretary marched from the room, smiling, perhaps with pride in what seemed to her a rather neat little lie.

"No!" said Mary, when the door had closed on her, and Hunter had stepped nearer, feeling his way toward her. "I've had enough persuadings!

You must know how I feel, and you wouldn't stay—you couldn't!"

He came nearer.

"Oh, I know a blind man is restricted, but we pick up our little clumsy ways. Let us say I've said good-by to Mary Dawson. I still insist on seeing Dian Holland."

"Don't say that name again! I hate it! I loathe it!"

"I don't. Dian means a great deal to me. And do believe me, I liked her stuff before you—before I knew. Ask Miss Arke."

"Did you? You mean that?"

"Ask Miss Arke. No, I can't dismiss Dian—at least, until I've told her what I was going to write to her when circumstances forced me to come to her. I put it off because—well, you see how I am. In two years I'll be all right, of course. We know that. And yet there's always a bare chance of failure. I couldn't be sure I had the right—— Mary, I'm going to tell you! It's been ever since the first day you ever entered my house. The mere sound of your voice—day after day—— Oh, you must know! You must know I love you!"

Her hand trembled in his, but her eyes were starry gray.

"Oh, you *are* blind," she cried, "or even you would have seen——"

"Seen? Seen what? Do you mean—— Oh, Mary! Tell me!"

"But you're good at guessing," she stammered, laughing. "I hated Dian. How I hated her! Didn't you see that? Didn't you understand? I was jealous of her—jealous!"

"Mary!" he whispered. "You little thing in the darkness! But the darkness is very beautiful, and very bright!"



THREE

By Theodosia Garrison

THERE were three ghosts who walked beside their graves

And talked one night, as living women do,
About the certain tragedies of life.

Said one, "I was a loved and honored wife
In that old world I knew.

Yet was the man who chose me far too great
For my estate.

High deeds he did that made the world acclaim
His very name.

Hence the world owned him and my life grew dim
For lack of him,

And flickered like a candle and went out
In dark and doubt.

There is great happiness in being dead,"
She said.

Then said the second, pacing by her side,
(Talking of love as living women do):

"Men called me beautiful when I was young,
In that old world I knew.

And love I took as lightly as a rose
That spring bestows;

Counting it little worth and giving less
Was all my happiness,

Until my youth was spent, and suddenly
Age laid his hand on me.

And I starved slowly, slowly, for that love
I would have nothing of.

There is much comforting in being dead,"
She said.

Then said the third ghost, pacing by her side,
(Talking of life and love as women do):

"I lived my life out in a barren place
In that old world I knew.

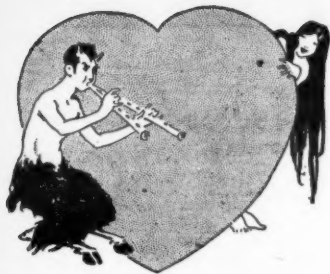
Creed and convention closed me in like bars.
I never saw the stars.

Where'er I turned, the warning hand I saw
Of some forbidding law.

Life was a prison where I slept and ate,
And could but wait

In awful patience till one turned the key
And set me free.

There is much liberty in being dead,"
She said.



The House of Cobwebs

By Melville Chater

Author of "The Rock-a-Bye Pine,"
"The Byways Madonna," etc.

AND there's his magnificent town house in New York," catalogued Mrs. Dallas, in her low, purring voice, "and his place at Newport—of which I showed you the photographs—and Pinelands, where he spends a few of the winter months, and — Are you listening, Reina dear?"

"Yes, mother," murmured Reina, gazing absently through the Pullman window, "I hear you."

"And he's senior warden in one of the fashionable New York churches," pursued Mrs. Dallas. "A man of many Christian virtues, my dear. And he practically owns the Coastal & Gulf Railway."

At intervals the mother's encomiums of Truxton Carnveigh continued to ring in Reina's ears. Then Mrs. Dallas resumed perusal of her society journal. She was a graciously handsome, if a rather artificial patrician, whose wealth had been squandered by a husband long since dead. For many years, she had lived withdrawn from the sets that had once known her, and now, at fifty, she was possessed of little more than a beautiful daughter and the never-extinguished ambition to regain access to those upper hundreds amid whom she had moved in her dashing youth. Even as the cave-hidden Covenanters of old were sustained by the Bible, so Mrs. Dallas, in her long, lean years, had virtually subsisted upon that society journal. French novels and the

doings of those upper hundreds comprised her reading.

"I'll be ready to go out," she would say as she scanned the morning newspapers, "just as soon as I've glanced over the marriages, deaths, and fashions."

Meanwhile, Reina's young mind was a world away from Truxton Carnveigh, the stoutish, middle-aged man whom the pair had met occasionally in New York, and upon whose invitation they were now journeying southward. A fleeting thought told the girl that he, or, indeed, any man, might well admire her handsome mother, and that she, Reina, was fortunate to have been included, on this account, in what was to be her first really grown-up house party. But, almost as fleet as the thought, outside her window was slipping past the sight in which she sat rapt—the panorama of deepening springtide.

Only last night had the Northern fields been scudding by, snowbound; the morning had shown her Richmond, amid a flight of green-tipped trees; and now all day long the miracle had been unfolding, hour by hour, until at last the crape myrtles' gaudy masses of pink and lilac had flushed into being—sun-kissed prodigies of color, an astonishment to the eyes. Thus, whirled overnight from her snow-drifted New England across earth's successive melting, budding, and blooming, Reina was

dazed. Never had she seen the South or known other than poverty and the aridness of a suburban town. Somehow she felt that, with this marvelous onrush of spring, the mysteries of a new, rich life also were crowding in upon her, taking her captive, remolding her to strange destinies. With her eyes fixed upon the transfigured landscape, the girl sat hour long as if in a trance.

She had inherited all of her mother's height, noble carriage, and aquiline beauty; but beyond that, Mrs. Dallas' face was comparable to a fine, pale mask, Reina's to a glowing rose. As she leaned forward with rapt eyes and slightly parted lips that seemed to in-breathe the essence of the Southern springtide, a poet might have said: "Here is Proserpine returning, from the underworld, with earth bursting a-bloom at the touch of her feet."

"Arrange your hair, my dear," prompted Mrs. Dallas. "We're due in ten minutes. First impressions are all important. One ought to say that to one's mirror every morning."

Then came to Reina a welcome cessation of the train's jar, and the flowing sense of being motored over white shell roads, amid the breath of wind-swayed pines. The young life in her responded as to a warm embrace. Truxton Carnveigh was seated next to her, and other guests were pursuing in their cars. There was speed, reckless speed, followed by a cheer, as Grant Altner skidded past in his racer and won the lodge gates to the tune of a bet that would have kept Reina in clothes for a season.

"Aren't people ever fined for speeding down here?" laughed Reina as she alighted, aglow with excitement.

"I dare say," answered Carnveigh, turning upon her his handsome, heavy-jawed face. "But then, you know, we've been inside my place for the last five miles, Miss Dallas."

"No, I didn't," faltered Reina.

But, in fact, what she really hadn't known was that such estates, or such Italianesque castles as that which towered above her, existed outside of story-books.

Followed luncheon, with a good deal of champagne and noisy chatter and a confusion of faces, among which Reina identified—under Carnveigh's mentorship—Jock Seeley, the polo player; various tennis champions; Vita Orme, of comic-opera fame; Mrs. Stanwix, breeder of blue-ribboned dogs; Max Candler, the horse-show judge; young Harneck, the cotillion leader; and other celebrities. Reina thought the women loud and amazingly made-up. The men she found much more attractive, albeit given to staring with a familiarity that nettled her. For Reina, the unmastered, the fancy-free, had always entertained toward mere man a touch-me-not attitude that was at once her mother's pride and despair. Often indeed had the girl been reminded of the sacrifices that had been made for her, of the hopes that devolved upon her—considerations that skimmed swallowlike over her willful young head and away.

"Oh, it'll be time enough to talk when I fall in love," she would laugh, insinuating into her voice the utter incredibility of such a thing.

"Love? Heaven forbid!" Mrs. Dallas would answer—for she had known hand-and-foot devotion for the man who had squandered her money, and she had never forgotten the lesson. "Love is civilization's word for slavery, my child. It's man's business to be enslaved; woman's to take pity on him. Anything more on her part leads to excesses of the worst possible taste."

Luncheon over, Carnveigh took some of the latest-arrived guests for an inspection of his place. Pinelands lay like a veritable realm of enchantment, shut in by an acreage of lofty boles

whose evergreen tops soughed eternally as with the trade winds of some invisible sea. Reina was led through mazes, sunken gardens, conservatories, without end. She was shown the famous Break-o'-day Rose, growing in beds of English soil, and the humidior device which created a moist air like that of its native land. There were Swiss chalets for workmen; there was an al fresco theater in the Trianon style; there was a swimming pool in an artificial cave, lighted so as to reproduce the effect of the Blue Grotto. The girl clapped her hands in delight.

"But no children!" she cried woe-fully. "No children to enjoy it all! What a shame, Mr. Carnveigh!"

Carnveigh—who had led her apart in the direction of the stables—turned to study her glowing face.

"My own are at Harvard," he said in his heavy, listless voice. "My guests either leave theirs at home or do without such luxuries altogether. Kids aren't popular nowadays; they aren't the thing, you know." He added, less cynically. "You're fond of children, Miss Reina?"

"I love them, love them all!" she cried with youth's largeness. "And they always come to me, too; they seem to know me at once. Horses I love next."

"Ah! There at least I won't disappoint you," he rejoined, piloting her through the box stalls. "Dandy, over yonder, may suit you, and I hope you'll try him out. But, remember, there are pretty lonely roads in these parts. If you go far, I'd advise your taking an escort or a groom."

"A groom! That would spoil it all. Why, it would be like—like taking an umbrella in surf bathing. Freedom's my motto—freedom, and a good road that leads to the ends of the earth."

"Rather a long canter that, young lady," answered Carnveigh, studying her out of his heavily lidded eyes. "I

had thought of offering myself, but nowadays ten miles is my limit."

"I've never galloped fast enough or far enough," she protested, slurring his hint. "No, and I've never had my highest ambition fulfilled."

"And that is——" Carnveigh moved a step nearer. "Maybe I can find a way to fulfill it."

She laughed gloriously.

"Oh, no, you couldn't! Don't tell mother; she would call it horribly bad taste in me. It's this: I've always had a secret desire to be run away with; to find that, just for once, my horse had the best of me; to feel that Fate is bigger than I, and——"

"And be brought home unconscious?" His cynical smile took edge.

"Oh, no—just lose myself for a while in speed and excitement and——and life. You think I'm queer?"

"I think you are—I won't say how charming. I think I'm fortunate to have you at Pinelands, Miss Reina."

He extended both hands. Unhesitatingly she gave him hers, warmed by his fatherly welcome, beneath which she seemed to glimpse the assurance that in time they would become yet closer friends, because of her mother. His hair was already graying; his heavily jawed face was somewhat too flushed, too much clouded by the apathy that follows excessive living; yet, despite this, his kindness shone forth clearly enough. Reina was at once drawn to him and mischievously disposed toward the possibility of beholding her dignified mother in the rôle of bride. She thought it would be amusing, yet quite agreeable.

Then she realized that Carnveigh still held her hands in his, and drew away from him. They rejoined the other guests, but somehow she could still feel the other's strong hands inclosing hers—almost molding them, it seemed, to fit his own. It was a distasteful thought—Reina hated being fondled—and

upon returning to her room, she actually washed her hands, to rid herself of the sensation.

"How long has Mr. Carnveigh been a widower?" she asked her mother, with the wicked intent of enticing the lady into some betrayal of interest.

Mrs. Dallas' reply came reluctantly enough.

"You must have misunderstood me, my dear. At any rate, people of the world don't dwell upon such topics, and I hope you've said nothing indiscreet. Mr. Carnveigh and his wife are"—she amended felicitously—"they are not together. And now, my dear, you must nap, or you won't look your best to-night."

"Yes, mother," answered Reina, responsive to training.

She was young, sweet, and pliable. Not yet had anything swayed her strongly enough to engender revolt. Dutifully she entered her room, drew the window shades, and prepared for sleep.

II.

But sleep she could not. It was too much to be expected of a young heart throbbing with the anticipation of romance. The spectacle of that new, soft southland had left the girl wide-eyed as an explorer. Outside, all the spring beckoned her. After half an hour of restive tossing, she jumped up, called the stables on her desk telephone, and ordered that Dandy be saddled for four o'clock. Then she donned her riding habit and peered into the corridor. The adjoining room, which showed Mrs. Dallas' assignment card framed in bronze, was tight closed. The lady regarded her after-lunch nap almost as a religious rite—a sacrament necessary to facial salvation, wherein unction was replaced by a massage cream.

Fluttered by a sense of secret adventure, Reina tiptoed past and descended through the great house. Men were

playing billiards; auction-bridge devotees were gathered on the tiled veranda; white-flanneled figures were at tennis on the lawn, where afternoon tea—of the decanter-and-siphon kind—was being served. She took a round-about course and won the stables, preferring to mount there unseen, thus avoiding possible offers of an escort. The young, the love immune, find their glories in solitude. Reina would ride alone.

"What lies across the river?" she asked, for she had noticed a wide stream, backed by woodland, on her drive from the railroad.

Jim, the negro stableboy, raised his cap and grinned.

"Hit's de Ol' Town, miss," he explained. "Nuffin but de Ol' Town."

The phrase had a romantic ring. She put questions concerning roads and bridges. Jim explained the whereabouts of a ferry. Reina noticed that the boy was staring curiously at her.

"What's the Old Town like?" she asked. "What's its right name?"

He scratched his head; his eyes rounded; his grin was slightly aghast.

"Cullud folks do call um de Debbil's Cobweb," he mumbled.

It crossed her mind that his stare was impertinent. She chirruped to Dandy, and they shot off. At the road's bend, she caught a last glimpse of the boy, who was staring after her in straddle-legged transfixity. Half an hour's canter brought her to the town—certainly not the Old Town, she reflected, as, with some disappointment, she surveyed its electric cars, apartment houses, and flitting motors. Yet, as she gained view of the river, nothing more than sheer woodland faced her from its opposite bank. Had she misunderstood? The bustling streets at her back vexed her hope of romance.

"Old Town?" she thought scornfully. "Why, it's *new*—as new as paint!"

At the waterside there was a large,

flat-bottomed power boat, with an old negro asleep in its stern. The click of Dandy's hoofs aroused him.

"Ferry?" he muttered mechanically.

"I want to go to the Old Town," said Reina. "Where is it?"

The negro pointed across at the wooded shore; then fell to scratching his head.

"Jes' you?" he asked, in slow wonderment.

She reined Dandy aboard. A sallow, sleepy white man, in undershirt and khaki overalls, appeared from somewhere. He took the wheel, the motor set up its vibrant stammering, and they were off.

"Was there an accident?" asked Reina, pointing to a sunken vessel's prow, distantly visible offshore.

The negro chuckled.

"Why, no, ma'am," drawled the skipper. "More like premeditated, it was. The Yankees sunk her in war times. Them's the remains of the ol' blockade runner."

And as she gazed upon the derelict, of a sudden all the present seemed to fall away from Reina; she felt that she was on historic waters, being wafted away from modernity to the past's realm of ruined dreams.

From midstream she caught sight of dike-scored meadows—the remains of ancient rice fields—which led from the water's edge to a great white-columned mansion, tree-screened on distant heights.

"You can land me there," she said, pointing to the old plantation's dock—or remains of a dock. Then she noticed that the man at the wheel was eying her peculiarly, just as Jim had done. The negro had stumbled up-right, his black face frozen with fear.

"Don' you tetch over dar, cap'n!" he whimpered his plea. "Don' you go nigh dat air Debbil's Cobweb! Ah don' want no goofa put on me!"

The captain pointed out his regular landing stage, explaining that thence ran a serviceable road, which would take Reina through the plantation. The negro continued his sulky mutterings.

"Damn ol' Debbil's Cobweb! Ol' witch woman's house! Pizen fish cotched off dar!" and the like.

In undertones, Reina questioned the captain.

"Nigger nonsense," was all he vouchsafed. "Haunted, Uncle Jeff says, an' I dunno what-all."

"Cobwebs!" mumbled old Jeff, over-hearing. "Debbil's de spinner. Hit tetch yer once, dat debbil thread, an' no matter how far yer goes, hit'll sho pull yer back ag'in."

They docked. The woods closed about Dandy and his rider. The "road" was but a winding sand path, strewn with pine needles, which had filtered through leafy tangles, so low drooping that the way was guessed rather than seen, so thick that all knowledge of day was forgotten. The light, in its dim unreality, was almost submarine. Holly leaves pricked Reina; she caught wafts of honeysuckle and myrtle mixed. Overhead, the invisible tree-tops crooned like a vast sea shell.

The woods thinned, and she began to perceive low mounds of masonry and clumps of brick, scattered over the sandy soil. Gradually she recognized shapes in them, dubious outlines that had survived a century's storms. Here was the fragment of a wall; there the foundation of a cellar; yonder the bleared profile of a chimney. It was a town, the skeleton of an old, lost town. She drew rein and stared about her, amazed.

Something brushed her face—a spider's thread. At its ghostlike touch, all realities seemed to fall away from her, leaving the eerie conviction that, halted here among the ruins of this forest-submerged town, she was but reliving that which she had known once

before, far off and long ago. It was all so hauntingly familiar.

As a sleeper will move in order to dispel some too-oppressive vision, sharply she brushed a hand across her face and cantered off. But almost immediately the light, clinging touch again stirred her cheek; at every turn in the road it waylaid her anew. Then a sunbeam revealed hundreds of silken cables floating in the air, with tiny gray spiders a-swing. This, then, was "the Devil's Cobweb." Yet even while she smiled at Jeff's superstition, she pressed her horse to a gallop, eager to escape from these thread-haunted woods. The path gave onto an open road, spanned by three bridges, under which groped black, sullen creeks—fit waters for evil dreams to commit suicide in at dawn and rise afresh from at midnight.

Across the first two bridges, Dandy's hoofs drummed; then, from the roadside, an old negro started up. He hobbled forward, waving both arms, as if to forewarn Reina of danger. Dandy halted with a jerk.

"Something ahead?" she asked. "A broken bridge?"

He was old, ragged, well-nigh decrepit, but he made obeisance to Reina with all the superb respect of ante-bellum days.

"No, missie, nuffin broke. But jes' please go kinder soft; dat's all."

Mystified, she walked Dandy across the third bridge. Meanwhile, the old manservant hobbled ahead, threw wide a pair of massive, crumbling gates, and bowed low, awaiting the visitor's entrance. Charmed with this survival of bygone hospitality, she reined inside, and found herself amid the decayed loveliness of an old plantation.

Facing riverward rose the great white, green-shuttered mansion, its pediment upheld by four fluted columns. A second diminutive pair of columns, scroll-topped, framed the

oaken door; and an overhead veranda commanded a view of the flower garden, whose sanded paths sloped away toward the stretch of dike-scored rice fields. All was wild, strangely faded and forlorn. The old farm bell hung, rusted, between two moldered posts. White paint flakes, shaled away from blistered walls, dotted the overgrown paths. Everywhere weeds bulged. From grossly luxuriant flower beds peered forth slim lizards, sunning themselves.

"What a place for children to play hide and seek in!" thought the girl.

She approached the house. Most of its shutters were closed, but—odd contradiction—the door stood wide open. Was the place deserted? Then from within came the low thrum of a harp, through which a woman's voice was heard singing:

"Child from the dark Afar,
Will ye turn to me—
Turn to earth by gates of birth—
On my breast to be?"

*"Yea, from worlds that faintest are,
Lo, I turn to thee!"*

Out hobbled an old negress, in age and dilapidation a match for the manservant; yet her snowy bandanna, adorning a profusion of pigtails, was the saving mark of an antique respectability. She curtsied to Reina, inviting her to dismount, then stood at attention in the doorway, as if trained in the old school, which withheld from no traveler a welcome. Reina tied her horse to the hitching post—it bore a maimed bronze Pegasus, poised for flight—and stepped across the threshold.

Cool dimness enveloped her; then a woman's "Good-by! Good-by!" blithely spoken, fell upon her ear. The sound rang with resonance, as through an empty house, giving her the impression of much space, many bare rooms. The caller or callers—to whomever the

words were addressed—must have slipped out by a rear door, for, upon entering, Reina found herself in a long, high-ceiled, wainscoted room that held but one other person—a woman, who sat at its farther end, in shadow; rather, she was half reclining in a wheel chair. On her one hand was a small table, which bore pad, pencil, and many scribbled sheets; on her other, stood a tarnished gilt harp. She peered at Reina through the room's twilight, greeting her with a sweet, mildly wondering gaze.

"You are from beyond the river?" she asked.

The girl nodded, smiling, with a touch of embarrassment.

"But you've never come before," continued the other, gently perplexed. "Your face is strange to me. No, I've never seen you in our circle here, before. Is there a message? How long have you been beyond the river?"

"I only came to-day," faltered Reina, with a sense of intrusion. "I was riding by your beautiful old place. The colored woman said— I thought —"

Still perplexed, yet with all kindness, the woman held out her hands. Reina came forward and took them. The clasp lengthened. It seemed as if the woman with the sweet, mild gaze were reassuring herself of something. Suddenly Reina grew conscious of being enveloped in a queer, chill air, amid which a spider's thread drifted across her face. She brushed the film away.

"If I am interrupting—" she said. "If your friends—"

"No, no! It's only that I'm not used to callers—to newcomers. At first I didn't understand; I wanted to reacustom myself. My friends from beyond the river can come back at any time; they are just on the other side. You are most welcome."

There was a queerness about the reception that caused Reina to suspect

for a moment that the woman was simple-minded. Then she noticed an old pier glass that, reflecting its distant, unseen fellow beyond the rear doorway, gave an illusive vista of rooms leading endlessly on into other rooms, half lost in shadowy distance. Evidently "on the other side" meant beyond the hall, on the other side of the old, rambling house. Somewhere out there they were gathered, she concluded; those vanished guests; and she was uncomfortably apprehensive that, thus shadow hidden, they were watching her in the mirror, without themselves being seen. Rather ill at ease because of this secret surveillance, Reina sat down.

Over the wide fireplace, the rosewood furniture—sadly sparse—the massively framed portraits, there lingered an air of poverty-stricken gentility. One of the side tables bore this odd assortment—a guitar, a musical triangle, a hand bell, and a queer, heart-shaped bit of board, mounted on wheels. Reina glanced at her companion.

"The witch woman!" she thought, recalling Uncle Jeff's phrase and smiling to herself at its absurdity.

The lady's face—spiritual as with an inner conquering glow, rather than ascetic from habit enforced—had retained, despite her gray hair, a singular smoothness, an almost childlike simplicity. It was a simplicity that perplexed; one could not tell whether she was a little mad or only very trustful. Her voice had a soaring, songlike quality—something of the blithe note with which a mother calls her children about her. Against the folds of an East Indian shawl lay her lovely hands—an invalid's hands, half lamed in their movements.

"Riding, you said? I once loved riding—long ago. You have ridden far?"

"From Pinelands, across the river—the Carnveigh place. I'm visiting there."

"Carnveigh? That's a new name.

But then, of course, I don't know any one over there any more. All the old names have died out since I've been over there."

"And that's been a long time?"

"Long? Oh, yes!" said the witch woman vaguely. "I suppose so. I don't know how long." She seemed to concentrate herself, but with indifference, as upon a trivial matter. "Why, I've been sitting here ever since the great going across—the war, you know, in which *that* was sunk."

Her directing glance passed out upon the far river scape and embraced the wreck of the old blockade runner. Thus, then, had they remained—these two stranded figures of a bygone day—changelessly facing each other across the years. Reina's puzzlement as to how her companion could have callers "from beyond the river," yet know no one "over there," gave way to youth's warm pity, for she saw that the woman was paralyzed.

"But your friends come to see you, surely!" she exclaimed.

"Oh, yes—all my old friends from beyond the river." And she glanced about, as if surveying the chairs where her recent callers had sat. "No, I'm never lonely."

Again the contradiction! And again Reina wondered if the other were a "natural." Then, fearing lest her glance had betrayed the suspicion, she forcibly changed the current of her thought. Immediately the witch woman said:

"Yes, I used to sing to the harp, but that was long ago. I've forgotten it all—all but one old song. I'd rather you'd read something to me, if you will." Then, replying to Reina's amazed stare, she added, simply enough, "I didn't mean to embarrass you. I'm sorry. So often I get another's thought and answer it without realizing that the question hasn't been asked."

Rather self-consciously because of those invisible callers—were they listening in the next room?—Reina picked up an old volume of poems, and, still a-tingle with the gusto of her ride, began:

"I sprang to the stirrup, and Joris, and he; I galloped, Dirck galloped, we galloped all three.

'Goodspeed!' cried the watch as the gate bolts undrew;

'Speed!' echoed the wall——"

"Please, not *that* one!" Reina looked up and saw that the witch woman's face was a-shudder. "That rhythm," she explained, "those hoofbeats, their merciless hammering! I can't bear it! Read something simple, more like a game—something that a child would like."

"Oh!" said Reina with joyous understanding. So, then, the mystery was explained; the visitor was a child, who, at the stranger's entrance, had run off to hide, elvishly watching her from ambush. She turned to "The Pied Piper" and read with all her heart. The witch woman listened, nodding and smiling. And the other listener? Every moment Reina expected to see the youngster come shyly forth, drawn to her knees by the old legend, just as the children in the poem were drawn by the piper's magic melody.

"So you love children," said the witch woman. "And they—they love you."

"Yes. I hope so. But how did you know?"

"Because he wanted to come to you—wanted you to take him up. I saw that at once."

Reina wondered how she could have seen it.

"Is he a neighbor's child? Is he from near by?"

"Near by?" The witch woman spoke with mild surprise. "Yes, near by. It's *all* near by, all one, isn't it? He's come from beyond the river."

"But not alone, surely?"

"Oh, no! All my old friends come, too. It's like the poem. They've gone across the river 'deep and strong,' and I'm the lame one who can't follow. I have to be content with glimpses of the other side. Yes, they all come back to me from beyond the river."

Was *that*, then, "the river?" Was *that* "the other side?" Vaguely the girl recalled having heard of a strange faith that included the belief in "coming back." Yet, even as she studied the other's face to convict her of insanity's delusions, Reina grew yet more oppressively conscious of a child, who peered shyly at her from the dim inner rooms.

"But how?" she faltered. "How can they come back?"

"My friends? They write for me. I hold the pencil, and they write. See!" She pointed to the scrawled sheets of paper. "That way I've always known. The hearing and the sight came later. Last of all, the touch."

Again the invisible filaments flicked Reina's face; but now she realized that they were unlike, quite unlike, those which she had felt in the woods. These threads seemed to wander over her body, with a queer lifting of the skin; and though she brushed them away, it was with the after sensation that they still clung about her.

"But *he*—who is he?" she insisted, thinking of the child as quite different and apart from the woman's shadowy visitors.

"I don't know. Just now, when my friends had all gone back, I saw him as you came in. I saw you together over there. I thought *you* were from the other side, too, until I took your hands. I can't always tell, at first, for it's all one to me, you see, all one."

"You mean he's one of *them*?"

"Yes; only he's a child because he's been beyond the river a long while, because he's been through the great sleep

and has forgotten 'all the past. Forgetfulness—that's what makes one simple and human—just a child—once more."

Again Reina's hand brushed her face.

"I don't understand," she said wonderingly.

"Birth, death, the great sleep, and then—rebirth; those are only the different rooms through which we pass in the house of life. See! Like that!"

She pointed to the tall pier glass, with its endlessly reflected rooms in shadowy vista. Her comparison crystallized the girl's former fancy. Surely a child's face was watching her from somewhere out there in the dimness! Again she faltered:

"I don't understand. It's all like a dream, a strange dream."

"You've forgotten; that's all. The great sleep washed it away. You're still like a child; you haven't fully re-awakened yet."

"And what reawakens one?"

"Sometimes great love; sometimes great loss."

"But why has he come back, as you call it?"

"Because he's grown lonely, over there in the silence—because he wants to be loved. He's one of the unborn."

She sank her forehead, propping it in her palm, while her other hand sought one of Reina's.

"How vital you are!" she said. "How vivid!" There was a pause; then she murmured, still with closed, shaded eyes: "Yes, there's the child that ran to you. He's so little and lonely and shy. He wants you to take him up, to play with him. He's trying to tell you something, to show you something. Dog—cold—red—" In her semitrance the woman shivered. "Men with guns— And so cold! Snow everywhere! Red? Oh, yes, it's a tall man with red hair, and the child is following him, trying to pull him back—back here. Y—yes, there is a dog!

He's so frightened— He's snarling — He's bitten the man—bitten his right hand!"

Queerly she interjected in her natural tones:

"No, I've not been away; it's only that *he's* picturing it all for me." Then of a sudden her voice became young and high and sobbing, strangely like that of a deserted child. "He's so tired waiting, so lonely and cold! He wants to be taken up; he wants you to play with him, to play with him!"

Her voice died away in broken snatches; it was as if a disappointed child were crying itself to sleep. Then, "Good-by! Good-by!" she called blithely, just as Reina, upon entering, had heard her call. The next moment she had opened her eyes.

Away rode Reina through the darkening woodlands. At the waterside she raised the ferry master's signal—a white flag. The power boat appeared. And as she was borne across the stream, to dock within sight of business streets, motor traffic, and intermingling faces, she felt heartily relieved to have passed from the Old Town to the new. Its glad, warm, human encounter restored her to herself; she shook off all else as the illusions of a solitary eccentric. But what had the witch woman said would awaken her? Great love or great loss! Reina smiled, supremely ignorant of them both.

She entered Pinelands by an unfrequented road, gained her room unseen, dressed, and came downstairs just in time for dinner.

"I knocked on your door," Mrs. Dallas accosted her, "but there was no answer, and I didn't care to wake you." Lightly she added, "And somehow you don't seem quite awake yet, my dear."

"Don't wake her, then!" cried young Harneck admiringly. "I noticed it, myself, as she came down the stairs; she seemed to be walking in the land

of dreams. Wanted—unknown man who has stolen a beautiful lady's heart. Who is he, Miss Dallas? What's his description?"

"Oh, red-haired," laughed Reina with flippant mystery. "And I think he has a scar on his right hand."

Dinner, with its fusillades of talk—a jumble of tennis, fashions, dogs, horses, and the stage—obliterated the afternoon's adventure. Like the Break-o'-day Rose, under artificial culture, Reina bloomed magnificently. It was a new experience, the homage of these men—all older than herself—whose every glance told her that she was beautiful and to be desired. She so loved it all! The Old Town and its inhabitants were as phantoms of another world.

There followed music, billiards, and the ever-present verbalisms of the bridge tables. Some of the younger men wanted Reina for dancing, but her mother interposed.

"I think," she said purringly, "that Mr. Carnveigh spoke of showing us one of his favorite spots before the light fades. I'll get a wrap and be with you immediately, my dear."

Reina submitted herself to her host, and they strolled off. Mrs. Dallas was to follow, escorted by young Harneck. The "spot" proved to be a stone-curbed canal—embosoming gondolas and spanned with Venetian bridges—which Carnveigh had laid through several miles of his property. He and Reina loitered on one of the bridges and watched the rose-kissed waters fade into purples and grays. As the moments lengthened, it occurred to Reina that her mother must have missed the path; then she noticed that Carnveigh was talking at random, and that he eyed her fixedly. Before she could stir, he had caught her in his arms and kissed her. She struggled free, her conception of him as a staid, kindly

man, and her mother's admirer, violently shattered.

"Mr. Carnveigh!" she exclaimed indignantly. "What have you done?"

But he only cried—not in excuse, but in blind passion:

"I love you! Can't you see it? I love you!"

III.

It ended by her accepting him.

A fortnight of Carnveigh's pleadings and of her mother's diplomacies had done its work. Reina was without experience; she had tasted nothing deeper than the charm of being loved; she was ignorant of her own emotional depths.

"Do you love any one more than him?" This, in her daily plyings of the girl, was Mrs. Dallas' eternal question.

And, truthfully enough, Reina was obliged to answer, "No;" yet adding, with equal truth, that she knew she did not love him as he loved her.

"That will come in time," sagely counseled her mother. "It is right and proper that the—ahem!—transports should be on the man's side; that is the way the creature is made, my dear. Woman's power lies, not in loving, but in being loved. A gracious yielding to propitious circumstance—that and no more—constitutes her greatest dignity and charm."

And so, more or less graciously, Reina yielded. A flush of recaptured youth touched Carnveigh, making him seem more loverlike in her eyes. Wisely, he never forced himself upon the girl, rather seeking in countless ways to excite her need of the new, rich life which his wealth opened to her. It was judiciously done. Beyond all his consideration and tenderness, her inborn love of luxury held her a prisoner. A world tour in his yacht, a villa on the Riviera, a part in the social events of three capitals—such things

as these were held before the future Mrs. Carnveigh. Meanwhile, he devised cotillions, fêtes, theatricals, in which she was cleverly put forth as the central figure. And she loved it. It went to her head, like the champagne she had learned to take; she gave herself up to youth's first fling, forgetting all but the moment's exhilaration.

"Reina—that is, queen," he would say. "And you shall be one—the queen of my world."

And, all unconscious of her own materialism, she would tell herself:

"Well, if he can't make me happy, then nobody can."

The affair was kept secret; Carnveigh's status necessitated it. Lightly he sketched for Reina the domestic difficulties that had culminated in a separation, the obstacles that had so far barred the way to a divorce. What he omitted to tell her was that he had been the offending party, and that therein the obstacle lay. He said that within six months' time—perhaps less—he would be free, when they would announce their engagement. A few weeks past, Reina would have exclaimed against accepting the attentions of a divorced man—not to speak of an undivorced one. But her stay at Pine-lands had developed her like a forcing process; in the fatness of its soil, she had blossomed into a new being. And so she took the mixture of awedness and gratitude with which she regarded Carnveigh as an earnest of her soul's fruition, receiving his caresses with obedience rather than with a realization of all that they signified. She had only one misgiving—the loss of her freedom.

"Will you always let me do as I wish?" she asked him once, with furtive eyes. "Not because I'd want to do anything, but because I'd like to know I could, if I wanted to."

Good-naturedly he laughed her fears away.

"And whenever you want to ride alone," he added, knowing her proclivities, "you shall do so. Only don't go too far, and don't forget to come back to me."

Dandy had been Carnveigh's first gift to her. He had wanted to join in her rides, but for Reina this would have ruined all. She craved solitude in those woodland gallops; she could imagine no companion whose presence, instead of glorifying, would do other than dwarf those tender vistas of ranked, wind-haunted pines. And Carnveigh had good-naturedly stayed at home, calling after her that she was a dryad, off in search of a centaur.

Of her first ride and its adventure, she had never spoken. Mrs. Dallas would have considered it in shockingly bad taste, and, moreover, memory of it had soon faded amid the swirl of gayeties. But there came the hour when Reina wearied of all that Pinelands had to offer, when even Carnveigh's unfailing tenderness only irritated her. An unsatisfied element in her nature stirred demandingly. And so, at the afternoon-nap hour, again she secretly stole forth to the stables and galloped away.

"You see," she laughed, stepping aboard the ferryboat, "I like your haunted house. I'm riding over there again."

But old Jeff solemnly shook his head, refusing to be bantered.

"What dat Ah say 'bout dat Debbil's Cobweb?" he muttered, half aloud. "Hit tetch yer once, dat damn' debbil's thread, an' hit shore pull yer back ag'in. Ol' nigger dunno nuffin, I s'pose. Huh!"

They neared the somber-wooded shore, and Reina's heart leaped in prospect. Why had she stayed away so long, spending herself on trivialities? It was as if some primitive strain in her, submerged for a time, were seeking realization; and as Dandy's hoofs

plowed through the wood trail, she flung up a hand and cried:

"Here I come, Old Town! Here I come!"

Again she cantered through close undergrowths, winning sight of the brick heaps which marked that realm of spectral hearths; again she glimpsed the spider hordes, a-sway on their glossy cables; and again the subtle atmosphere of the place mounted to her brain. Those visitants from "beyond the river," the shy little creature who had watched her from among the shadows—it did not seem so wildly impossible, after all.

The old negro bowed low as she passed through the plantation gates; the old mammy welcomed her as if she had been a heralded and prepared-for guest. Reina ventured upon a few questions.

"Yaas'm," said the negress, "dey's all dead, our fambly, all 'cep' ol' missie. An' dey always was great sperrit raisers, our fambly was, 'way back befo' de war. An' I reckon ol' missie, she done keep it up 'kase she lonesome.

"Dem gallopin' soun's? Well, hit's like dis yere: Marse Richard Cole, from down de ribber, he gwineter marry ol' missie, an' ebery night he come a-ridin' erlong, an' she stan' up dar"—she pointed to the balcony—"a-listenin' for him to cross de bridge. Well, come a full-moon night, jes' befo' de weddin', an' she heahs dem hoof soun's an' runs out on de balcony, an' up gallops Marse Richard's horse in de moonlight, with Marse Richard hangin' dead from de stirrup. No-buddy eber knowed de why an' wharfo', 'cep' Marse Richard mus' 'a' fell an' been dragged.

"Den dey tuk ol' missie away—Ah dunno whar nor what-all—an' when she come back at las', she jes' done gone disremember eberything; she jes' like a chile. An' dat's all Ah knows, 'cep' dey's worriments in her head when she

heahs dem hoof soun's on de bridge, an' de moon's full."

Reina entered. She heard, "Good-by! Good-by!" and found herself among the shadows of the big, bare room, almost sure that she had caught sounds as of light feet scurrying off into the garretlike spaces of the old house. She slipped into a chair and laid her hands in the witch woman's, as if to resume their relation where it had left off. Much was lurking in Reina's heart, much that she was bashfully eager to ask. A fancy possessed her—a sweet, playful fancy—as she sat there peering into the mirror, with its endless reflections of dim rooms. Perhaps if she were very still, very patient, a shy little face might glimmer from out there among the shadows, and give her some sign of recognition.

"Yes?" said the witch woman. "You feel it, too?" For Reina was brushing the ever-recurrent cobwebs from her face. "That always comes when one of them is near, trying to show himself. It's like weaving—weaving a garment from the threads of life."

At last the girl understood. It was indeed as if threads were being drawn out of her flesh by some invisible loom! The witch woman dropped her head; her eyes filmed.

"Yes, he's here," she said disjointedly. "He's so little and lonely and shy. He wants you to take him up, to play with him. He wants to come back and be yours."

"Mine?" whispered Reina. "But how?"

"Through love. What man and woman feel for each other the unborn feels as a longing for birth. It's the same thing, you know. Love between man and woman—that's the unborn, drawing them together."

Reina caught her breath. Was this the thing that had come to pass between herself and Carnveigh? Vehemently her instinct insisted, "No!"

"Always?" she breathed.

"Not always. There are loveless marriages, and through them the meaner spirits are forced into being. Often it's only once in a life that the unborn draws together the two lovers who will give it birth."

There woke in the girl's heart a curious resentment against Carnveigh. Just as she had objected to him as her riding companion, she now objected to him as her lover. Some deep-rooted instinct seemed to warn her against him.

"Yes," said the witch woman, after a silence, "he wants to ride with you. No—not that. He wants to play a riding game. Oh, yes! He wants to ride on your whip."

Reina had laid her crop on a chair behind her. She sat breathless, poised between hope and fear. Was it—could it be true? Would he come out, astride of the crop, in a game of cockhorse? Then something—the sound of far-off hoofbeats—fell upon her ear. A wild fancy told her that Carnveigh had taken horse, had traced her, was coming to her there.

Across the first bridge the hoofs drummed like distant thunder. The witch woman had caught them, too; her face showed a helpless, rapt terror that verged on madness. The hoof thunder beat upon the second bridge. Reina leaped to her feet.

"He shan't come here! He shan't!"

She was speaking from a sudden realization that this room was a precious and intimate spot, a place which Carnveigh stood quite outside of and could never share with her. It seemed as if over the house some fateful event loomed large. Impetuously she darted out and across the fields, with the night-marelike sense of having to stop Carnveigh before he reached the last bridge.

Standing in mid-road, she waved. The horse reared up and halted before her. But the rider was not Carnveigh.

She saw a tall, booted, loosely clad man whose face was shaded by a broad hat. The man swung himself to earth and came forward, leading his horse. So profoundly aware was Reina that the man's eyes had never left her face that she was quite unconscious of her own never having left his.

"I was going over the hill—on—beyond—" he said, pointing to where the road forked.

His words rang in her ears with an odd familiarity—"over the hill—on—beyond—" They jingled like the nonsensical refrain of some nursery rhyme that she had known long, long ago. Also, she was certain that he had already changed his mind about going farther, and she was not at all surprised at it; that he should dismount and come in seemed so entirely natural. Then from somewhere—as if she had stumbled upon the doggerel's succeeding line—the reply rose to her lips:

"But wouldn't you like some tea?"

Together they entered the plantation. The solecism of her having arrested this strange, dark, serious-eyed man on the highroad with an invitation to tea now dawned upon Reina, but under a purely humorous light; for something told her that he had understood—and would have understood no matter what she had done.

"Over the hill—on—beyond—"

"But wouldn't you like some tea?"

It fairly haunted her, that absurd nursery-rhyme talk of theirs. She realized the incorrigibility of her conduct and wanted to laugh. Then she glanced at the man and saw that he was smiling gravely.

"Queer, isn't it?" he agreed. "And it's queerer still because I don't like tea."

"And it's queerer still," smiled Reina, "because there isn't any."

"Why," began the man, "I thought you said—"

"That's just it," answered Reina

with hopeless irresponsibility. "I didn't say, 'Won't you *have* some?' I said, 'Wouldn't you *like* some?'"

"Oh!" said the man.

They faced other and laughed frankly. It was exactly like a scene from "Alice in Wonderland" in which they had taken part, both aware, yet unashamed, of the topsy-turviness of it.

Why had she brought in this utterly strange man? Why was she strolling with him, quite at ease, through the old flower garden? Why was she planning with a secret joy to lead him—almost like a home-comer—into the long, dim room from which her thoughts had so hotly interdicted Carneveigh? She could not have said. Only it seemed to her as if all that she and this man were speaking and doing sprang from some force quite outside of their own wills.

She did not ask him to come in, but she led him to the veranda, knowing that he wished to come. He removed his hat. As he did so, she observed that on his right hand he wore a peculiar ring made of a horseshoe nail, its broad head forming the bezel. Then she saw that the hand bore a fresh scar and that in the sunshine his hair glinted reddishly.

Their glances crossed and clung. Through the open door came the sound of the witch woman's voice as she touched her harp and sang:

"Child, art thou mine at last,
Come at last to me
From as far as yonder star
Through immensity?"

"Yea, but hold me over-fast,
Lest I slip from thee!"

IV.

They rode together, Reina and the strange man.

"Ride with me," he had said, simply enough, as they had reissued into the

garden. And simply enough she had nodded, as if his words were the command for which she had been waiting all her life.

As they reined past the windows of the long room, he turned in his saddle and waved a hand at one of the reddening panes. She asked him what he saw.

"It's gone now," he said, as if puzzled. "It was only the sunset on the pane, I suppose. But all the while we sat in there, I kept on thinking that there was some one—some one we couldn't see—"

"Yes? Yes?" Eagerly she was prompting him, just as a child will urge the exact words of a fairy tale, familiar to both narrator and hearer. "Tell me, please."

"A kid, I thought it was—a little kid, hiding from us in one of those dark rooms."

"And the cobwebs—you felt them?" she entreated. It was as if an all-important point in the fairy tale had been slurred. "Oh, say that you felt them!"

"Why, yes!" He faced her in surprise. "But how did you know?"

She laughed—the mysterious laugh of a child who withholds a secret, later to be revealed.

"And where are we riding?"

He eyed her with his grave smile.

"Over the hill—on—beyond."

"And wouldn't you like some tea?" she smiled back as the pine woods closed about them.

They rode. It seemed to Reina that she had always been waiting to ride with this man—that it had been in default of him that she had balked at any other companion. She felt as if his tall, loosely clad figure had always been a part of the somber woodscape that flitted by them like the forest of a dream. Little was said; words seemed superfluous. Only at times they exchanged a smile as if at the barefaced absurdity of the thing. They might

have been mere boy and girl, playing at runaway, abrim with the mischief of their prank. And through it all, giving key to their mood, rang that nonsensical nursery jingle in time with their horses' hoofbeats:

"O-ver the hill—on—beyond—"

"But wouldn't you like some tea?"

They rode. In and out by winding woodpaths they cantered at random, glimpsing vistas of crumbled masonry and sprawled brick heaps, while from the dim, encircling pine woods there seemed to float wind-borne whispers of the Old Town's ghosts, bidding Youth ride far and free while yet it might. Reina's fancy was that, somewhere ahead, there was a child mounted cock-horse on a riding crop, leading them farther and farther away from the realities that lay beyond the river, and deeper and deeper into this dream town, on toward the setting sun.

They halted. She saw a lean-to of boughs, a bed of freshly plucked pine tassels, and the black smear that marked an extinguished fire.

"My last night's camp," he said.

"And to-night?"

"Here again—in the woods. That's my way. And you—you live over there among the little painted houses?"

She nodded. He smiled gravely.

"But you weren't made for them. You are a wild bird; your heart is here." With a wide gesture, he included the surrounding woodlands. "Some day you'll hate the little painted houses; you'll go away from them." His eyes found hers; his quiet, serious voice added, "You'll come with me on the trail, Wild Bird, the long trail that leads to the Last Camp."

He spoke with a deeply intoned conviction that rendered any answer inadequate. Instinctively her eyes glowed in acquiescence.

He dismounted. He laid the charred fagots together and rekindled them.

He uprooted a turf from the soil. He stood at Reina's saddlebow with the turf in his outstretched hand. It had been done with a simple gravity, as if some rude rite were preparing. Then he took Reina's hand and spoke one word. She thought she had never felt so light a touch or heard so gentle a voice:

"Stay!"

Contrary to her every true instinct, she shook her head. His face, which seemed to reflect the unconscious poise of Nature, changed not at all. He seemed to be so sure of her as to know that precipitancy and delay alike were inconsequent to the issue, that their fates must be fulfilled. Only, with a slight gesture of resignation, he opened his hand and let the clod fall back into the soil.

Something—a sense of her untruthfulness to him in that headshake—smote Reina. She leaned over and stroked his hair. Magically his answering gesture melted into an embrace. She felt his kiss, and all the world swam. Then, panic-stricken, she lifted herself from his arms and galloped away.

"Good-by, Wild Bird!" he called after her. "Soon! To-morrow!"

Away from that realm of dreams she rode, knowing herself to be forever a part of it. Gladly she rode, and smilingly she embarked with old Jeff, whose prophecy had been fulfilled. Yes, the cobweb thread had touched her and would ever draw her back again. Fulfilled, too, was the promise of that impetuous blossoming which she had beheld from the train window. Pine-lands had awakened her luxury-loving self in a fortnight, but her soul had bloomed in an hour.

"To-morrow! Oh, glad to-morrow!" rhythmically beat her thoughts as she took the homeward road.

Was it real—the great mansion that loomed up, greeting her return? Were they real—the funny, insignificant lit-

tle humans who paced the terraces or lingered over their last hand of auction? Reina was drawn into the post-mortem discussion:

"You see, with only five trumps and a singleton in the dummy——"

"If she had exhausted the side trumps, instead of crossruffing——"

"And so, as I was blocked in the club suit——"

"But why didn't you return my spade?"

She listened, suggested, agreed, inwardly laughing at the profound importance attached to those absurd pasteboards. *They* weren't real; the discussion was a mirage of words; the whole Carnveigh estate might melt at any moment, like a pricked bubble. Her impressions were like those of a half-drowned man, who, being resuscitated, doubts the verity of his surroundings.

All that evening, she tried to shake herself into a readjustment, but it was useless. She seemed to be surrounded by mere puppets, whose faces she scanned, blankly asking herself—for there were lovers among them—how they could ever have inspired one gleam of such an aureole as that which crowned her. And when she strolled off with Carnveigh, it was only to smile inwardly, with a pitying wonder, at his protestations—so baseless, so unreal, seemed to Reina all that he vowed he felt for her.

But reality came at last, in the depths of her night's sleep. For then, with an overture of galloping hoofs, there appeared in her dream the figure of a child—a child with redly glinting hair and serious eyes, who stood poised as if for instant retreat, regarding her with sidelong, shyly smiling face.

"Why, it's the Cobweb Child!" she cried in delight.

And she awoke to find herself sitting upright, with outstretched arms, repeating that grotesque phrase of sleep's coinage.

It was dawn. She crept to the window seat and watched the miracle of sunrise. And suddenly she perceived that, since yesterday, a veil had dropped from her sight. Even as she beheld the guessed-at earth emerge from gloom into golden reality, so that shadowy spirit world which held the Cobweb Child now lay smilingly palpable before her. "*Great love or great loss—*" She laughed away the one, and, gazing into the glorious east, gave thanks that it was great love that had awakened her.

That afternoon she rode in secret to meet her lover at the camp fire. Had he changed overnight—dwindled into a casual commonplace, alien to her inner life, as were all other men? It seemed impossible that he could remain so supremely himself. But the first glance reassured her. There was the same large, freely moving presence, the same grave face, lit by eyes that brooded like age-old, forest-reflecting pools; and therein shone the same strange light of ancient possession of her—a gaze that knew, and waited in security.

"I'm Reina," she said, as naively as a child introduces itself.

"No," he said with grave humor, "you're Wild Bird. And I'm John Scott."

"No," she returned, "you are—you are my Camp-fire Man."

"You see I've kept it burning. I'll always keep it burning for you."

"Did you dream?" she whispered, in his arms.

He nodded.

"That I called you away from the little painted houses; that we struck the long trail that leads to the Last Camp."

Little they asked, each of the other's life. For them it was enough that they were together, with horses under them, and the sand trails of the ghostly Old

Town to ride in—practice, he said with his grave smile, for that long ride to the Last Camp.

"Just like the birds I've seen on an island up in the Northwest, flying about in little circles with their young ones, and training them for the big flight southward in the winter."

Of all the ages, this was their own appointed hour, and to it Reina yielded herself with closed eyes that barred out memory of yesterday and forethought of to-morrow. Willfully she blinded herself, ever timorous of facing issues. Though Pinelands claimed one part of her, the Old Town claimed another part, and the river floated her secretly back and forth. And so, fulfilling this swift double blossoming of her nature, the girl's life became strangely twofold. There was the Reina of Pine-lands, whom Carnveigh called his queen—the gay, captivating creature, as artificial as her surroundings, which she loved brightly, but lightly for the mere moment's worth. And there was her other, unsuspected self, Wild Bird, who rode off in secret to meet her lover at the ever-burning camp fire, returning thence as to a world of unrealities, falling asleep at night to dream of the aloof, shyly smiling Cobweb Child.

"Look!" said the man, once, as they drew rein on the river bank at twilight. He pointed to the silvery foreglory fringing the eastern pine tops. "The moon's at full. This is our night."

That day Carnveigh and his guests had gone on a motor trip, and Reina—who had remained at home on some pretext—knew that they purposed to return after dinner, by moonlight. And so, instead of signaling for the ferryman, the lovers rode back to the camp fire, over which they cooked a catch of fish, eating them from plates of cunningly woven leaves—a trick he had learned from some Indian tribe. When the moon was fully up, he rose, saying:

"Ride with me. I've got something to show you."

They took the sandy trail, and, winding in and out through the Old Town's scattered débris, came at last upon the heart of it. Four massive brick walls, cloistered among pines, there, in the hush of the woods it towered—a great, red, ruined church. They dismounted near a group of sunken gravestones, and entered. Grass-carpeted, away stretched its spacious nave, studded with broad-girthed pines whose tops, outsoaring the roofless ruin, showed on high amid the moonlight's glamour. Its bare, lofty windows were backed by the forest's dim tapestries; its ceiling was the blue vault, sown with stars.

"Look!" whispered Reina, spelled by the silence. "Look yonder!"

It was the ghost of the place—a marble tablet, set high in the eastern wall and blindly white beneath the moonbeams. Reina approached and read:

A Memorial
to

Colonel Maurice Moore, gentleman and soldier of the King, who, in the year of our Lord 1725, founded in a wilderness

The Town of Brunswick,
reserving for the glory of God the tract of land on which was built this parish church of St. Philip.

Long she stood there, stirred with the sense of race—that great race, alike hers and his, this "gentleman and soldier" who had wandered and reclaimed the wilderness and worshiped and died. Meanwhile, Scott had disappeared. Now he returned with an armful of lightwood, which he laid under the tablet, on the spot where St. Philip's altar must once have stood. He beckoned to Reina.

"Our fire," he said. "Light it with me. See, this way!"

Hand to hand, grasping in common a lighted knot, they stooped to kindle their fire.

"I've seen some of the Northwestern

tribes do it," he explained. "It's part of their 'marriage medicine.' Then the brave sings his love song, and the piece of turf comes last."

He threw himself at her feet, beneath one of the lofty pines. Overhead the moon swam clear of clouds, flooding the ruin with ghostly light. There was a preludelike lapping of waters and murmuring of winds. At last he spoke.

"Hear them, Wild Bird, those waves on the shore! That's the river, singing to the earth. And the wind—that's the earth's voice, singing back to the river. The river, he's the man, coming down from the mountains to find his woman. The earth, she's the woman, lying out in the moonlight, waiting for him. And the tide—the tide that draws him to her, down from the mountains and back again to her from out of the sea—what's that? Why, it's the same thing that drew me down here to you; it's the thing that drew you away from the little painted houses, out into the woods—to me! Rightly there isn't any name for it, but the river knows, and the earth knows, and *we* know, Wild Bird!

"The tame people, over there in their houses, can't love this way; it's only the wild ones, like you and me, who can hear the tide and take the tide together and face everything that it brings.

"Wild Bird, my people were that way. My mother saw my father, somewhere here in the South, and he took her away from the little painted houses and out into the bigness; and they were caught in a snowstorm, and wandered into the Chippewa camp where I was born. And there she died; and there he stayed on until he died; and there I grew up, until I wandered off with a horse and a gun and got to be a guide in the Canadian woods.

"For I hated the cities, where everything is finished and smooth and there's

nothing more to do except to change what's been done. I hated the little painted houses, and the people that lived in them. I hated the white men's women, because their men were their servants, because they softened their men's strength.

"But one day, when I was out hunting with two Englishmen, their dog saw something. *They* said he had gone mad, but an Indian would have said he had seen a spirit. I touched him, and he bit me, and that night I had fever. They told me that I snapped and foamed and that they packed me in snow to keep the fever down. All that night I could see pictures of what my father had told me, at odd times, about the South, where my mother was born and where they had met; and all night long, I thought, there was a kid—a little kid—somewhere near me, calling me to come away and play with him.

"Next morning I got up and rode off. The Englishmen went with me, but I didn't notice them much. For the fever was still on me. I could still see those pictures of the South that seemed to take me back, yes, hundreds and hundreds of years. I still thought that little kid was somewhere ahead, calling for me to come on.

"Then, one day, I found that the Englishmen were gone, and that I was still riding. I took my bearings and found that I was headed southeast. The fever had left me, my sight had cleared, and I knew that I'd been sick. But somehow I just went on, keeping away from the towns, camping by night and riding by day. It seemed to me as if I was going back to some country that I'd lost, those hundreds of years ago, and that all worth having in that country was going to be mine.

"Then at last I said to myself, 'You're a fool. There's nothing here for you in this little smoothed-out country.' So I turned my horse and started

back for the Northwest. And then, before I knew it, there you stood in the road. And when I saw you, I loved you; and I knew that all worth having in this country was mine!"

He was squatting on his haunches before Reina. His face, lifted to hers, was strangely transfigured in the moonlight. The camp fire glowed; the woods and waters murmured their interlude. Again he spoke, his head and shoulders a-sway, his voice rising in a rhythmic singsong. Was he speaking or chanting? For such as this was the first rude music, born when woman's first lover gazed upon her and speech failed. It was as if that bare, tree-columned sanctuary had been invaded by some ancient nature worship, of which he was high priest.

"Wild Bird, you are mine and I am yours. For we've lit the camp fire together, and we'll take the sod, and halve it, and throw it on the fire, to show that we will share the same earth and fire, all along the trail.

"This is our night. For the river is flooding in from the sea, and the earth is holding him in her arms, and the tide is full.

"To-morrow we'll go away from here. We'll go away, just ourselves and our horses, and take the long trail that leads to the Last Camp.

"Because we love each other, we will not need a home. We'll climb the mountains, and swim the rivers, and gallop the plains. We'll watch the sun rising over the snow peaks, and the eagle soaring in the cañon, and the salmon leaping the falls. We'll ride south to the Everglades, and west to the redwoods, and north to the northern lights. Wherever we are together, that will be our home.

"Because we love each other, we will not want what is old and finished; we'll make something strong and new. We'll be like the man on that stone, up there. We'll go off into the wilderness, some-

where in the world, and find a wild tribe, and build them a town, because we love each other. That is what we'll do until we are old.

"And when we are old, we'll go away from there and pitch our Last Camp. It will be on the top of a high cliff, sticking out into the ocean; and there'll be nothing but the waves rolling, and the gulls calling, and you and me. We'll light our last camp fire, and keep it burning till the end. We'll sit and think of how good it all was, and how we loved each other to-night when we were young, and how we love each other ten times more then, when we're old. And, just as you lean against me now, you'll lean against me then, till the last.

"And then the fire'll die out, and there'll be no more words between us—only the breeze always blowing over us, and the gulls always calling above us, and the waves always rolling around us, to the end of time. Will we'll live, and wild we'll die; and nobody'll know our grave but the gulls and the wind and the sea."

His voice ceased; then slowly he drew Reina forward by both hands until they stood beside the sinking fire. He took a clod and halved it between them, and each threw a half upon the embers.

"We'll share both earth and fire from to-night," he said, holding her close, as, with splutter and smoke, the two elements met and commingled. Then, he supporting her, they paced from the altar site, down the tree-columned nave, and out to their horses. Reina was the first mounted.

"Catch me!" she called laughingly over her shoulder, and shot off in the moonlight.

She heard him laugh back, already in pursuit. On they galloped, their laughter passing to and fro, each perfectly understanding the other. Now they were neck by flank, and now his hand

had reached her. She heard him cry out a warning, but not in time. A low-hanging limb struck her across the forehead; she drooped over into his arms; then felt herself being borne to earth.

For a moment the blank blackness lifted from her, and she knew that water was being poured on her face.

"Take me home!" she whispered.

Then the blank blackness engulfed her once more.

V.

There was sensation that night at Pinelands when the returned guests discovered Reina's absence. Mrs. Dallas grew hysterical, and Carnveigh stood there, white-faced, organizing search parties, and amid it all a great, roughly dressed man rode in under the moonlight, leading a second horse and holding the half-conscious girl in his arms.

She was put to bed, the nearest doctor was telephoned for, and the stranger was questioned by Carnveigh. But the stranger would say little or nothing. He glanced about at Pinelands and its guests somewhat as an Indian might survey orchids in a conservatory—curiously, yet not at all impressed. He shrugged away a proffered reward, and declined to drink. As for a bed—for the hour was late—he gravely declined this hospitality, saying that he would prefer to sleep out there under the pines and would return to-morrow. Then he swung his great shoulders out of the hall, which seemed too narrow for him, and vanished, leaving the amazed guests with the feeling that some tonic forest wind had blown through the house, drowning their perfumed cigarette smoke and ruffling their correct clothes.

The next day he returned and saw Mrs. Dallas in private. At the end of half an hour, he reissued, imperturbable as ever, rode off into the pine woods,

and was not seen again. The guests breathed more freely and returned to their auction bridge. Among them Mrs. Dallas moved to and fro, explaining with suave smiles how fortunate it was that the stranger—fine fellow!—had ridden by just in time to succor Reina and her runaway mount. To Carnveigh she privately deplored the girl's romantic impulses, which had tempted her into a moonlight ride in the woods, and expressed the hope that she would soon be under his care. Then, with a changed face, she entered Reina's bedroom for a refutation of the stranger's monstrous claims. But, to the lady's astonishment, Reina faltered forth:

"But it's true, mother! It's true!"

Shocked, scandalized, insulted—these poor words but weakly convey Mrs. Dallas' emotions as she sat on the bedside, learning how her only daughter had met a great, strange man in the woods and fallen in love with him.

"But, my dear!" she gasped. "Your upbringing, your sense of the decencies! How could you?"

"I don't know," said Reina despairingly. "It just *happened*."

"*Happened*? So does an earthquake. So did the—ah—stealing of the Sabine women. My poor child! What is the great, unscrupulous creature's name?"

Reina gasped.

"I don't—" Then an inspiration came: "It's Burns. No, no—it *isn't* that, but it's something just like it. It's—" A wretched silence ensued, then she exclaimed triumphantly, "It's Scott! I knew it was one of those English-literature names!"

Mrs. Dallas uttered a weak, wild, hopeless sound.

"And what about his people?"

"Well, he had a father," slowly began Reina, "and a mother—"

"That," Mrs. Dallas responded puntingly, "we will take for granted. In Heaven's name, what, if anything, do you know about him?"

Out of the miraculous intimacy which she knew her mother could never grasp, Reina strove to recall some salient, satisfying fact. But hopelessly she saw that her experience was a thing to be felt, not explained. Under her mother's application of cold common sense, the girl's mind balked; she was obsessed by one fact, one only. Despairingly she said:

"He was bitten by a dog."

Mrs. Dallas perceived her cue and forced a laugh. Certainly it was a case of madness, she agreed with light ridicule, either from hydrophobia or moonlight. She represented Reina as having been the passive agent, involved on an impulse; the other as a man of sudden and unreliable whims. Such infatuations did occur, of course, but they were baseless, evanescent, ill-starred. Fortunately, however, both would soon realize their mistake, no doubt. And what would they have lived on? What would their social standing have been? And what domestic virtues were to be expected of a man who had been brought up by Indians, had never been inside a church, and who preferred sleeping under a tree?

For three days, with the doctor's help, Mrs. Dallas managed to keep Reina in bed. During those three days, spent alone with the girl, the mother plied her with skepticisms and discouragements; and on the fourth day, when Carnveigh was admitted, Reina turned her face to him like a child chastened by correction, and dutifully received his kiss.

The next day, wan and subdued, she came downstairs to be made much of. She was overwhelmed with congratulations on her recovery. The ladies caressed her; the men swamped her bedroom and her table place with flowers. Young Harneck had his joke.

"By Jove, Miss Dallas, it looked serious for us fellows, the other night, when that big brown chap came dash-

ing up with you across his saddle! We thought you'd thrown us all over for him. The 'Young Lochinvar' stuff, you know."

Reina smiled, her heart heavy with tears. It seemed to her as if, amid that gayly chattering crowd, she was in secret drearily alone. Of a sudden her world had changed; what had been was over. Mrs. Dallas, suavely tender, yet tenacious, still pursued in private her policy of disillusionment, and with full effect.

But, more than that, the sudden blow across Reina's forehead now seemed to the girl like a rough hand that had bidden her wake from dreams to actualities; she had arisen from her bed almost like a brain-fever convalescent, feeling that she had passed through an obsession from the world of shades which had disintegrated under the relentless sun glare of everyday life. She went about touching objects and insisting to herself that here was reality, the only reality, and that all else was illusion. She perceived the stark extravagance of her woodland idyl, the madness of ever transplanting it into a world of facts. And she was mortified, now, at that swift yielding of herself—"for a mere whim on his part," declared Mrs. Dallas—too mortified even to seek a confidante.

Yes, it was at an end, her youth's "Moonlight Sonata"—as magical as that melody and as fleeting. Yet far-off strains of it, as from another world, would always float through her life, yielding back a glimpse of the dream through the homely business of the day.

Indeed, in so swift a flight of time had her Camp-fire Man come, and taken her, and vanished again, that almost she could have believed him to have been a phantom, but for something that she had found on her hand upon regaining consciousness. It was a ring, hammered out of a horseshoe nail.

Once, as she strolled alone, a bare-legged country boy slipped sheepishly up to her from between the pines and handed her a rough parcel. It contained some charred fagot ends and a singed turf. Also, there was a large, freshly plucked leaf, in which had been pricked the word: "Waiting."

So it was real! They had indeed been wedded, according to his woodland rite, over the burning of these fagots and this turf! He loved her—was waiting—would always wait! For a moment her blood rose in tumult, then relentlessly she put all such thoughts aside. Removing the horseshoe-nail ring, she folded it up in the parcel.

"Take these back," she said to the rustic messenger. "That is all."

Carnveigh, tenderly solicitous, urged her not to ride beyond the river again, at least without a proper escort.

"I never will," she promised him, with a warmth of gratitude for his dull, comfortable way of love, which at least cost her no suffering. "I'll never ride there again."

He saw that she was not herself, and strove to give her all that which, according to his lights, comprised a young girl's happiness. Gayeties thronged the days at Pinelands, and into them Reina threw herself with such apparent zest that even Mrs. Dallas, watching from under discreet lids, thought:

"The infatuation is over. She is ashamed of it."

But bedtime brought its feverish solitude, when Reina would toss to and fro, seeking in slumber a glimpse of that dream life which she had found and lost, over there in the Old Town. But in vain. The ivory gates were closed to her; only through the gates of horn came false, meaningless phantasmagoria, to tantalize her. Upon awakening, she would sometimes feel a blind fury against her Camp-fire Man. Why did he not suddenly ap-

pear, swing her across his saddle, and gallop off, with that quiet sovereignty over her to which she had yielded at sight? Or was he so sure of her that he was willing to sit by his camp fire waiting for her return? At that her pride rankled, yet she clung to the one comforting thought that he still waited—would always wait; that for her the camp fire would always be aglow.

Mrs. Dallas spoke of returning home. Carnveigh urged an extension of their visit. Reina remained silent, allowing his persuasions to prevail. "A good omen!" thought Mrs. Dallas. For so complete was the lady's felicity in all that is signified by "a brilliant match" that she could conceive of no other consideration on the girl's part.

That afternoon Reina rode secretly beyond the river. Hers was a double secrecy—not only against Carnveigh, but against the Camp-fire Man as well. She would visit the ruined church; perhaps draw close enough to hear his fire crackling among the pines—that was all; then gallop back to her chosen life, with this last memory hidden in her heart.

But a wrongly taken path led her, before she was aware of it, to the edge of the little clearing that had marked his camp. The lean-to had been destroyed; the fire was extinguished, its site almost obliterated by rains. For the first time, she realized in full that all was ended.

"Oh, oh!" she cried, in blind bitterness. "How could you forget so soon?"

She told herself that she was the truly loyal one; that she, to her sorrow, could never forget. For she felt herself to be forever bound to him by the Cobweb Child, whose face now started forth in memory, yielding her such poignant comfort as a woman feels when studying through tears the lineaments of her fatherless firstborn.

She galloped out of the woods,

pressed on to the old mansion, and gained entrance. But it was in vain that she sat there, striving to reinvoke her former awareness of that shy little face which had seemed to peer elvishly at her from the shadows. She felt herself to be forlornly alone with an old woman in a great, empty house—that was all. Impulsively she fell on her knees by the witch woman's side, laying both hands in hers.

"Oh, Cobweb Child!" she cried within her heart. "Bring him back to me, Cobweb Child!"

But the witch woman only sat staring before her with wide, empty eyes.

"Why," she said in mild wonderment, "there's no one here at all. Something's frightened the little shy one away. He's gone back beyond the river."

"Come back! Oh, come back to me, Cobweb Child!" Reina's voice echoed through the great, empty rooms.

There was a long silence of waiting; then slowly the witch woman shook her head.

"There's nothing!" she sighed. "I can hear a child sobbing far, far away in the dark; that's all."

And as Reina reissued into the sunlit world, she heard the woman within touch the chords of her old harp and sing a fragment of her old lament:

"Child—mine for but an hour—
Must ye go from me?
Left behind, oh, may I find
Ever sight of thee?"

*"Nay, but in each budding flower,
In each blossomed tree!"*

The next day Reina and her mother were traveling northward.

VI.

Carnveigh had suspected something; even Mrs. Dallas' diplomacies had failed to keep the truth entirely hidden from him. He had questioned her,

and she had admitted what she called "the child's mad freak," assuring him that it was but a silly infatuation, a mere romantic figment of untried youth; that it would be forgotten in a fortnight. And, in fact, when Carnveigh made some glancing remark to Reina, in New York a few months later, she merely laughed, at once acknowledging and dismissing the affair as a closed chapter, with a flippancy that, however, did not entirely reassure him.

But not for nothing had Carnveigh been born with a square jaw. The complexities of a woman's heart were an indifference to him. "Win out whether she likes it or not, and in the end she'll like it," had always been his motto with the sex. After a secret consultation with Mrs. Dallas, he organized a yacht-cruise and sent the two abroad, with a party of carefully chosen friends, in his *Astec*. At the last moment, business kept him in New York, but he planned to join them later.

At Nice they received his first cablegram. Mrs. Carnveigh had died suddenly. The subsequent letter urged Reina's immediate decision. Carnveigh's plan was that she should winter on the Riviera—where he would join the party—and return with him in time to be married at Pinelands in the spring.

She replied at once, consenting.

"But let me have my full freedom until then," candidly she wrote. "Just one last fling before I settle down into a staid, old married woman."

Carnveigh understood, and tactfully allowed business to continue to detain him in New York.

The armfuls of roses that had filled Reina's stateroom at departure followed her, as it were, all over the Continent. Miraculously they turned up in city after city, always with cablegrams from Carnveigh. The girl's simple wardrobe had blossomed into

frocks that had once been beyond her wildest imaginings. Carnveigh would have it so.

"And why not, my dear," observed Mrs. Dallas, "since it gives him so much pleasure to do it?"

The lady smiled all day long, overjoyed at seeing Reina her old self once more. Luxury, roseate life, the charm of being beautifully gowned and ardently admired—all these things had wrought in the girl a transformation. Once having determined on her course, apparently she intended to make it a brilliant pageant; and at times even her mother was taken aback by some of the more ambitious schemes which the future Mrs. Carnveigh broached. She lived in the passing moment and all it brought, but now less with her old girlish gladness than with a more mature avidity. Too much she could not crowd into one day and night. Even among the carefully chosen guests she found matter for conquest, and indulged in reckless flirtations.

"But, my dear," demurred Mrs. Dallas, "what would Truxton think?"

"Then why be alive?" she laughed irresponsibly. "Why be anything at all? The life he gives me appeals to one side of my nature—appeals strongly—and I'm going to live it to the full. And besides, I write him of all I do. Love him? Why, of course! He's a dear old thing."

Occasionally she got into difficulties with strange foreign youths, who scraped acquaintance with her and ended by bombarding her with passionate, suicide-breathing epistles. A youth who met her in a palace called her his queen; a second, who met her in the Roman campagna, called her his beautiful gypsy; a third—encountered in a cathedral—called her his Madonna; and so on. Young Harneck—he was of the party—said something about "three persons in one goddess."

Reina laughed, tore up the letters, and wrote Carnveigh all about it, adding:

"Of the three mes, which will you have? On second thoughts, I'm afraid I can promise you only the queen. But then that's all you want, isn't it?"

Of course it was all mere courtship nonsense; yet perhaps the cathedral suitor was not entirely wrong, and the Madonna existed in her, though under eclipse. For occasionally Reina stole off by herself to some public garden, to watch the children at play. Once, in the Tuileries, a small boy conceived for her one of childhood's sudden, violent fancies, and she fell into conversation with his mother.

"My second child," explained the lady, adding quietly, "My first boy died."

In the silence that followed, Reina drew the boy close to her and passed a hand through his hair. The lady asked Reina a question; then, at the other's reply, stammered a surprised apology.

"Pardon, madame — mademoiselle. Somehow I thought—I don't know what made me think it—that you, too, had known what it is to lose a child."

Of this incident she did not write Carnveigh.

Her wonderful winter had drawn to a close. She completed her *trousseau* at Paris, and the *Astec* turned homeward. In the lower bay, Carnveigh and his man, rose-laden, came aboard by tug. Carnveigh looked rather "pulled" and nervous. Whether or not it was that Reina's sympathies were touched, Mrs. Dallas fairly purred at the warmth with which the girl received him.

"Fortunate child!" she thought, beaming upon the pair. "What a match! No wonder she's so happy! No wonder she loves him!"

And the mother discreetly retired to her stateroom until the sky-scraping line hove in sight.

Carnveigh's plan was that the *Astec* should proceed southward at once. The northern winter had not yet broken up; Reina ought not be exposed to it, and he wanted her to have a month's rest at Pinelands before the wedding. He himself would follow, with some of his guests, in three weeks' time.

"I think," said Reina reflectively, "that I should prefer to go down by train."

Expostulations greeted her; stuffy cars, grime, and a night's unrest were urged against the plan. Reina repeated her words in that quiet, meditative tone which in past months Mrs. Dallas had come to recognize as a mark that her old ascendancy over her daughter was ended.

"Oh, to tell the truth, I suppose she's sick enough of the boat," laughed Carnveigh. "Well, the queen has said it, and the queen's word is law."

The next afternoon he saw them off.

"Only for three weeks," he whispered to Reina, at parting.

All the way southward, Mrs. Dallas bemoaned the jolting train, anticipated car sickness, longed for her comfortable stateroom on the *Astec*. Reina gazed out at the world and said nothing. She who had "done" the foreign cathedrals in a spirit of reckless nonchalance was now silently absorbed in the flat prospects offered by her Pullman window, at which she sat until late that night, resuming her vigil early the next morning.

"And she's seen it all before," reflected Mrs. Dallas, thinking of a year ago, "and it's just the same as it was then."

And indeed Reina found it quite the same. Again the speeding train, the flying fields; again the magic transformation from snowdrifts to greenly jeweled branches, and from them to the crape myrtles' pink and lilac blossoms, a hectic climax; and, through it all,

again the sense of a rich, new life, on-rushing like destiny.

They detrained and were motored to their destination over white roads and between blooming fields, across which wafted the unforgettable essence of wind-swayed pines. Once or twice Mrs. Dallas glanced curiously at her daughter. The girl seemed dream-struck, dazed.

The housekeeper welcomed them to Pinelands. Mrs. Dallas spent the morning in superintendence of the unpacking of Reina's trousseau. Somewhat to the lady's chagrin, the bride to be absented herself from the business and strolled off to the stables. Dandy knew her at once, and whinnied under her caressing hand, as if eager to be taken out.

"And now, my dear," urged Mrs. Dallas, after luncheon, "do nap! You haven't napped for *so* long. I assure you, it's woman's elixir of youth."

And, for the first time in many months, Reina yielded. But, once in her room, she found that—just as it had been, a year ago—she could not sleep. The newly won springtide haunted her, not now as before, with its glow of romance, but like the return of some sweet, sad-faced ghost. Lying there in her kimono, she turned and tossed, while the sunlight reddened. *Dandy? A gallop?* She got so far as to lay out her riding habit and crop, then relinquished the idea and lay down again.

A light tap came at the door. She thought of her mother, of her maid; then, in a kind of nervous tension, swung herself to a sitting posture on the edge of the bed.

"Come!"

The door opened, then closed again behind—Carnveigh. By the subdued light, she saw that his eyes were sleepless, that his face was haggard and drawn. He advanced, all travel-

stained, and laid his hands on her shoulders.

"I had to come," he said in a tense voice. "It has been too much for me."

Innocently she apprehended everything but the truth.

"What has happened?" she urged. "What is it?"

"*You!*" he whispered, with his sleepless, burning eyes upon her face. "You, my queen!"

"I?" she said vaguely. "You've worried about me?"

He was at her feet; his head was upon her knees. He was talking spasmodically, and with deeply wrung breaths, like an exhausted runner.

"I had no intention of this—none! I didn't mean to come until three days before the date. But I—I caved in. Reina, my queen, can you understand? Do you realize what it means to a man who has lived his life with freedom, as I always have, at last to love one woman—you—so deeply that he remains true—*must* remain true in her absence? Do you?"

"Yes," she said, wonderingly, "I think so."

"Do you realize how long it has been since that first evening here, on the bridge—and how long you have been away from me? Because I was not divorced, I was under the double duty of not compromising you by even the smallest sign of my feelings, and so I played the game for your sake. You wished me not to come over, and I stayed behind—for your protection. But do you realize what it cost me, with you always in my heart—the waiting, the longing? For nights, before you returned, I couldn't sleep. Then you came—I saw you alone for a few hours—I held you in my arms—and again you were gone. Do you realize what those few sweet hours, snatched out of eight months, caused me when I was alone once more? Oh, do you understand?"

"Yes," she said, still vaguely, "I think so."

"When you had gone, I could think of nothing but you, and of the spring-time breaking here, and of us together here in the spring. That's why I followed on the night train; that's why I have come to you—my wife!"

He lifted his head, gazing at her in intense triumph. She got to her feet; then she felt his arms slip about her and found herself locked to him. In the embrace, she divined something new and menacing. She wrenched herself from him and stood free.

"I don't like that!" she said indignantly.

But again his arms were about her; she felt herself being smothered in a storm of caresses and wild whisperings. All the reserve that heretofore he had exercised toward her was flung to the winds. She saw him shockingly transformed, and his face frightened her. Again she struggled, but his clasp only welded itself about her, subduing all movement. Suddenly she saw herself as a puppet, a possessed chattel, to be used under the supremely ruthless law of his desire. Mere words could not have framed that which surged up from her nature's depths—an exclamation of disgust. He recognized it, came to his senses, and released her.

"No," he said bitterly, "you don't—*can't* understand! From what you said, I thought you did. I thought—Oh, Reina, Reina!"

She closed the door, locking out his plea for forgiveness; then threw herself on the bed, a-tremble with bodily exhaustion and mental revolt. She felt that for one brief moment she had been his bondsman, and that a mark of shame was upon her. In her inexperience, she had thought that she had grasped his meaning; but the pain of separation that she had once known—though not for Carnveigh—was a

hopelessly different thing from that which he had meant. She had been thinking in woman's terms, he in man's. Now she saw him—and forever—as a new being—her possessor. Those few vital moments had taught her more about him than all the previous months had taught; they had shocked her out of her pale conceptions of marriage and into the glaring knowledge that, for her, he was utterly the wrong man. No, his was not the love whose caress is freedom, and that would unselfishly relinquish rather than debase; it was that other, the love that clutches and coerces, possessing at whatever ignoble cost. She now knew that, in yielding herself to him, she must steel herself into a new, mechanical creature, bidding farewell to all her latent best.

"Good-by! Good-by!" she sobbed.

It was a call of the body and of the soul, blent in one, which seemed to go out from her and into uttermost space, seeking to retrieve that precious, latent part of her which, she felt, had slipped shyly out of Carnveigh's embrace and vanished from earth forever. Then the familiar ring of her words brought a memory of the witch woman's voice, and the long, bare room, with its cobweb-haunted shadows, quick with the presence of invisible guests.

She fell into a feverish doze, through which she seemed to carry over and project that far-reaching call into the sleepy world. An answer came, and it was this:

She dreamed that she was dressing to ride across to the Old Town—that she must at all hazards reach there—and that Jim's voice said, "Miss Dallas, yo' horse is waitin' on you." At once there woke the drum of hoofs, galloping nearer and nearer; then she beheld that which had forsaken her dreams these many long months—a little shyly smiling face.

"Cobweb Child! Cobweb Child!"

Hers was the cry, and she knew that

it embodied the great longing with which she had fallen asleep. She awoke, uttering the words, to find herself seated upright in bed, brushing from her face the old, eerie sensation as of clinging cobwebs. Then she saw the child. In a patch of dimly filtered light he stood, astride of her riding crop, as if playing at cockhorse, and steadying himself by the chair against which it leaned. Unerringly she knew that little face, crowned with redly glinting hair and half turned toward her in a shy, wistful smile; the little body, set as if to seek hiding at the first alarm.

"I must not frighten him," was her drowsy thought, "or he will go back again to the other side."

But, even as she thought it, he was gone. Mechanically she got up and began to don her riding habit. The desk telephone rang. She recognized Jim's voice:

"Miss Dallas, yo' horse is waitin' on you."

With the sense of being still in a dream that was determining her actions, she found her way out to the porte-cochère, and mounted Dandy. There was a second horse. Jim was saying something about Mr. Carnveigh's being down in a few moments, but the girl scarcely caught it, for Dandy was already off and away. He seemed to know Reina's goal, and to bear her ferryward almost without guidance.

"Damn' ol' debbil thread!" mumbled Uncle Jeff in greeting. "Tetch yer once, an' hit pull yer back ag'in, sho's you born."

Once more the woods of the Old Town enveloped her, and therewith the gay, idle existence of the past months fell away from her like a shoddy garment. And now she saw it all so clearly—that her nature was a cloven thing wherein her dream self had wrestled with her worldly self, of which two

irrevocably sundered halves Carnveigh possessed—*could* possess—but the latter. She saw how—petted, spoiled, and softened—she had yielded up the one, with its birthright of love and pain, and had sunk ignominiously into the easier slavehood of the other; and that although she married Carnveigh, served him, became his gorgeous butterfly, there was one thing that she could never face—the thought of children, hers and his.

And what of her other self, the dream self? Henceforth in sleep alone might it break its chains and slip back to her lover at the waiting camp fire. Only in dreams would they ever ride together, and live, and love, and know their child—the Cobweb Child.

The sound of flame, crackling amid the brush, brought her a poignant recollection. She spurred past into the road, and won a glimpse of the old plantation. But the sight of it determined her against entering; she would ride past and put its memory behind her forever. Just ahead, lifted a little hill, over which she would ride, and beyond—

"Over the hill—on—beyond—"

"But—"

But from out of the gates there came riding a tall, loosely clad man; and at his gesture she halted, as he had halted at hers, a year ago; and vaguely she divined that, as then, the call had gone forth and brought him from somewhere in the world. They smiled, but without words, then wheeled and galloped away like two ghosts of their last year's selves. It was all so strangely unreal; nor did they fully know each other until at last they stood amid woodlands, face to face beside his waiting wayside fire.

Carnveigh had followed. Doggedly he had planned the ride in order to show Reina that he intended to be excluded from nothing hereafter. He

had found her gone, and had guessed her destination.

Now, as he drew rein on the Old Town Road, angrily at a loss, he saw two mounted figures—a man and a woman—issue from the brake. The

man lifted an arm, pointing far westward. For a moment they leaned in their saddles and kissed; then straight into the setting sun's red orb they galloped, and the darkening woodlands closed about them.



THE SORCERESS

SHE compoundeth scent and sound,
 Magic from the whole world round;
 She compileth heat and breath,
 Eager love and laggard death;
 In her mortar doth she press
 Every spell—

the sorceress,

Through the hours of moonlit dark,
 When the ghosts must pause and hark,
 When the pulses grow more faint,
 When forgotten hopes make plaint—
 Hopes and dreams we die for which—
 Night the great one—

Night the witch!

Poppy spell she brings for you;
 Rest that lingers all night through;
 Dreams of glory for a heart
 That is wed to fiery art;
 Joy, or love, or peace, at will.
 The enchantress—

is she still!

Out of starshine and of dreams,
 Shadows of the white moonbeams,
 Aching phantoms without stay,
 Sprites that blow the dawn away,
 She compoundeth loveliness,
 Mystic Night—

our sorceress!

ANNA ALICE CHAPIN.



In Account With Posterity, Dr.

By Hugh Kahler

Author of "The Southern Cross,"
"Handsome Is," etc.

JOAN, I wish to talk to you—seriously."

Mrs. Warwick's voice was impressive in its depth, and her countenance, with its keen eyes and rugged promontory of chin, was almost formidable. The tall girl who turned quickly from the hissing fire of fatwood to challenge her mother's scrutiny reflected more than a hint of inherited strength of mind. The fact that she was young and straight and strongly erect, that her skin glowed wholesomely and her lips were full and red, did not obscure a resemblance to her mother that a less shrewd woman than Mrs. Warwick would have been quick to recognize and consider. Joan was not in the least like a girl to whom one speaks in the tone her mother had used, and a glint of defiance gleamed in her eyes even as she lifted her brows in mute interrogation. Mrs. Warwick ignored it and went on.

"I have no patience with the lax American attitude toward marriage. A mother who fails to safeguard her daughter's interests in such a matter is criminally negligent. I have no mind to fail in my duty toward you. You are twenty-one. You have beauty—of a sort; you have the best blood in the country, and you have been brought up to be worthy of it; you will have next to nothing in the way of money—from me. Your future, therefore, depends directly on the wisdom of your marriage. I am clear?"

Joan's lips contracted.

"Quite," she said coolly. "Go on. You interest me."

Her mother bowed gravely.

"You have been educated too well to entertain the absurd, romantic ideas of novel-reading girls regarding marriage. You are aware that it rests almost entirely with you to decide your future. Within limits, you can marry as you please. And it is your duty to marry—wisely. You owe it to me; still more to yourself; most of all to your children."

Joan's eyes widened.

"And all of this is preliminary to —"

"To plain speech and sound advice, of which you are obviously in need. It apparently escapes your attention that Vincent Frayne is stopping here, that he represents in every respect the ideal man for you to marry, and that he is already more than a little interested in you. He comes of a family as good as yours. He will have twenty millions, at least, when he is twenty-five. He is—personable; he has manner. And you treat him as if he were a nobody. You ignore him, neglect him, or, worse still, take him as part of the background. You——"

Joan flushed.

"Nonsense! I've played about with him a lot. Yesterday we rode half the morning and played golf almost all afternoon, and I danced with him after dinner at least a dozen times. I"—her flush deepened—"I don't mean that I

—I've angled for him, as you appear to wish, but I've not ignored him."

Mrs. Warwick shook her head.

"I mean exactly that. You 'play about' with him, as you put it. And that is the worst possible way of accomplishing anything. A husband like Vincent Frayne has to be earned. You must study him, pique his interest by repression, by evasion. Your hail-fellow attitude effectually precludes his acquiring the right degree of——"

"I don't care for this kind of motherly advice," interrupted the girl. "You—you make the whole thing seem odious, sly, contemptible. Let's not discuss it, please."

"Very well." Mrs. Warwick hesitated. "One other word, though. You must drop that impossible Smith person at once. I cannot compel you to behave properly toward Vincent Frayne, but I decline to stand by while you—*flirt*—with a crude, penniless clothopper named William Smith. You owe it to——"

"Never mind my debts to posterity, please. I'll pay them when they fall due. And I've scarcely spoken to Mr. Smith. I hardly know him. You have the queerest ideas, mother! How on earth you conceived the notion that there was the least danger there——"

"I intend that there shall be none whatever," said Mrs. Warwick, her chin much in evidence. "For a number of excellent reasons, I prefer that your acquaintance with Mr. Smith shall terminate. Avoid him hereafter."

Joan parted her lips as if to speak, but thought better of it. She shrugged her shoulders, instead, and left the room.

The rocking-chair portion of the community at the Weymouth Arms observed, during the next few days, the activities of Mrs. Warwick's fine Italian hand with lively interest. Lean spinsters exchanged acid smiles above

their knitting as she waylaid Mr. Frayne in the lobby and gushingly begged him to share the Warwick table in the dining room, averring that she and Joan were poor company for one another. They smiled again, that evening, when she arranged, by sheer force of will, a four at bridge, with a stout, good-natured golfer to round out the party. They whispered eagerly when Frayne was cajoled into joining mother and daughter on a motor excursion across the pine-green hills to Cedarhurst, next morning. It was pathetic to observe Mrs. Warwick's manipulations. She was pitifully obvious, eager. They were sorry for her.

Joan submitted more or less gracefully. She endeavored to make things pleasant for Frayne, and if she resented her mother's meddling in her concerns, she kept her annoyance to herself. As for Frayne, it was a different matter. He had been chivied from pillar to post by ardent mothers and their cool-headed daughters long enough to be gun shy. He was harmlessly unintelligent, good-natured, pleasant-mannered. He could elude the machinations of clever women far more easily than the downright methods of Mrs. Warwick, which nothing short of abject flight or palpable discourtesy could checkmate. But he was nervous, self-conscious, apprehensive, and his retreating jaw retreated more obliquely than ever under the stress of these emotions. It seemed to him, sometimes, as if Mrs. Warwick's eyes regarded that feature rather too directly. He was correct. Mrs. Warwick felt that a recession of jaw argued a feeble resistance, a weakness of will. She deduced as much from the tint of Frayne's lashes, brows, and mustache, all of the innocuous color of a new straw hat. She studied these symptoms deliberately as she planned her campaign. There were times, she told herself, when it is the duty of a good

mother to be utterly cold-blooded. She was.

The Smith person, however, furnished complications. He was not sufficiently percipient to take his dismissal in the milder forms. In the face of Mrs. Warwick's frosted antagonism, he persevered in frequenting the society of her daughter, exhibiting a bluff good humor that was proof against hints and glances. Mrs. Warwick had recourse, at length, to direct speech. She cornered him in the lobby after dinner and took him far into her confidence. She commented on the romantic impulsiveness of feminine youth, its tendency to minimize differences in social planes, not to draw judicious distinctions between poverty and wealth, its lamentable tendency to misunderstand even the most innocent of attentions. She felt, she told him, that once he understood the difficulties of her position, he would not complicate them by continuing to distract Joan's attention from her obvious destiny. Throughout which, Mr. Smith surveyed the lady with the bewildered blankness of innocence.

"I don't know what you mean," he said, when she gave him opportunity. "It hadn't occurred to me that I was interfering with destiny, exactly——"

Mrs. Warwick beamed graciously on him.

"Oh, I understood fully that you were not serious. You are far too clever not to realize how absurdly impossible it would be for my daughter to be happy except in her own class. I only wished to secure your—shall we say your passive coöperation? I'm sure

we understand each other, Mr.—er—Mr. Smith."

"We do."

Mr. Smith's chin projected almost as ruggedly, now, as Mrs. Warwick's own submaxillary. Observing its prominence, she realized that she had done well in dealing firmly with him. His eyes wandered to Joan, dutifully entertaining Mr. Vincent Frayne at the billiard table. A blue light glimmered in them. Mrs. Warwick, following his glance, beamed on the ideal couple; she had managed well, she knew. Joan would forgive her—in time. A mother's duty——

"And one owes something to one's grandchildren, too," thought Mrs. Warwick.

The telegram, dated from Raleigh, on the very day that Vincent Frayne had departed for the relative safety of Palm Beach, informed Mrs. Warwick that her daughter had been duly united in marriage to William Henry Smith and was now on her way North with her impossible husband. Oddly enough, as she read it, Mrs. Warwick's face relaxed into an expression of beatific content. She nodded several times. At last she chuckled.

"They'll never believe me," she told herself. "It can't be helped. If I hadn't meddled, Joan would have been hypnotized by the money. And I owed something to my grandchildren. I think I've paid it. They'll have"—she lifted a hand to her face and her eyes snapped—"chins!" she finished happily.



THE WOMAN OF IT

By Gelett Burgess

Author of "Are You a Bromide?" "Goops and How to Be Them," etc.

A PHOTOGRAPH of Kitty—

Believe me, it was pretty!

I never saw so beautiful a face in all my life.

Of course I must admit

I'm prejudiced a bit,

For Kitty is the girl that I am going to make my wife.

And so I showed it round a bit,

And that was when I found a bit

Of inside information on psychology of sex;

For when I took it out

And passed the thing about,

I'll tell you what they said to me, to comfort and to vex.

I showed it first to Harry:

"The girl I'm going to marry!"

So I announced, and waited; and then Harry looked again.

"Gee whizz, but she's a peach!"

I quite approved his speech,

And so I showed the photograph to Harry's sister, then.

Harry's sister gazed at it,

And seemed a bit amazed at it;

A while she hesitated, and then finally she said:

"Oh, really she is cute!"

And then the girl was mute.

She handed back the photograph and turned a little red.

So, feeling rather silly,

I showed it next to Billy;

And Billy shook me by the hand and said, "You lucky brat!

She's surely a good-looker!

However did you hook her?

' Imagine you coralling such a pretty girl as that!"

So I proudly went to Alice
 And, without apparent malice,
 She said she thought the finish of the photograph was fine.
 While Emma said, "How old is she?
 She looks a little cold. Is she?"
 Then put the photograph aside and gave no other sign!

So all throughout the city
 The men declared her pretty;
 The girls where interested, but they never called her fair.
 Some frowned and said, "How stunning
 That costume is! She's cunning!"
 Some smiled, admired the pose, or asked the color of her hair.
 The men all praised her clearly:
 "She's a lovely creature, really!"
 They said: "Old man, she certainly has got the looks, all right!"
 The girls all looked askance at her,
 Then gave another glance at her,
 And called her "interesting," "nice," or something else as trite.

Then, "What's the answer, cutey?"
 I asked my little beauty.
 "It's just 'the woman of it,' dear," she said in accents gay.
 "If you were not benighted,
 You'd really be delighted
 Not at the men's remarks, but what the women *didn't* say.
 For listen: Nowadays a girl
 Will never dare to praise a girl
 Unless she is so homely that nobody fears her—so,
 If they *had* called me pretty,
 I'd be ashamed," said Kitty.
 "They've given me the genuinest compliments I know!"





The Man Who Broke the Rule

By May Edginton

Author of "The Woman Who Broke the Rule,"
"He That Is Without Sin," etc.

SYNOPSIS OF PRECEDING CHAPTERS

Lance Harrison, a young soldier of fortune, finds himself stranded in a London hotel and proposes that he discharge his obligation by playing the violin for the entertainment of guests during meals. In the course of his new duties, he attracts the attention of a rich elderly widow, Maude Iron, who falls violently in love with him. Lance is tempted by the woman's huge fortune, and when she proposes marriage, he light-heartedly accepts, without in the least realizing what he is doing. The honeymoon is hardly begun before he is bored and weary, but he is at bottom honest and kind, and he determines to live up to his bargain. Then, one day in the hotel dining room, he sees the girl of his dreams, young, fresh, beautiful. Their eyes meet, and it is a case of love at first sight on both sides. Twice, Lance manages to meet the girl, Dorice Waymore, on the bathing beach. She thinks Maude is his mother, and he does not deceive her. Then Maude, jealous and watchful, begins to suspect his interest in Dorice, and insists upon leaving the place at once. Lance has no chance even to say good-by to Dorice. Maude takes her husband home, and then begins a monotonous life that drives the young man frantic. In a burst of rebellion, he announces that he is going up to London—alone. Maude consents only after a terrible scene, and the next day is stricken with paralysis. For months she lingers on, scarcely leaving Lance out of her sight. His only comfort is in the sympathy of her nurse, Dorothy Reay, who deliberately sets out to win him. With his heart full of Dorice, he cares nothing for Dorothy, but he is led into a mild flirtation. Maude's jealous suspicions suddenly flame up again, bringing on a second and fatal stroke. But as she lies dying, alone in the room with the nurse, she insists upon making a will, leaving Lance nothing in case he marries again. The nurse is forced to witness it, but before a second witness can be called, death intervenes. The nurse conceals this will, and Lance inherits all Maude's money unconditionally. Shortly afterward, he goes up to London, to find Dorice. Dorothy is at work in a hospital there, and Lance sees her occasionally. As a desirable *parti*, Lance is taken up by a Lady Albright, who has an impecunious little niece, Stelle Gatherby. Unfortunately for her plans, it turns out that Stelle is a friend of Dorice Waymore's, and so Lance meets his dream girl again. By mutual consent, they say nothing as to their former acquaintance and see each other in the park secretly every day. Stelle finds this out, however, and is mad with jealousy. Neither of the girls knows how Lance got his money. He has not had the courage to confess to Dorice.

CHAPTER XVI.

HARRISON had a letter on one of those pure-gold mornings to which he now awoke, and the letter annoyed him. He said, "Curse her infernal cheek!" angrily. All women now, except the beloved one, were sticks and bores, and pretty

impertinences penned by an houri in a senses' paradise would have intrigued him not at all. But Dorothy Reay's impertinences were not of a particular prettiness; they tended to pertinacity. She was not quite clever enough for complete restraint. So her letter, part pleading, part jesting, scolded roundly.

It began: "My dear Lance," and the salutation struck him suddenly with amazement, since she had never used his first name before. He was not to know that she had thought long, and spoiled two sheets of paper, and bitten her cheap wooden penholder through, before thus deciding. So he exclaimed, "Curse her infernal cheek!" angrily, because he had all but forgotten her and those immaterial kisses.

She wrote:

MY DEAR LANCE: What are you doing? Are you still in town? And have you put me quite out of your memory? I was going to say "out of your heart," but perhaps I was never in it, was I, Lance? Why don't you write to me? Why don't you come and see me or take me out? Sometimes I think men are all alike—all faithless, all worthless. Only, I somehow feel that you are different.

I'm awfully fagged. You would be sorry for me if you could see me, dear. Can't you come and take me for a run in your car, for an hour or two?

I don't understand the way you've behaved! I think it's perfectly rotten. I am awfully angry. If I don't hear from you soon, I shall come and look you up to-morrow when I'm off duty from three to five. And if you're not in, I'll wait.

Oh, I must tell you I've put my sables in cold storage. I want to take care of them because you gave them to me. Anyway, of course, the only kind of fur one can wear in summer is white fox. Yours very affectionately,

DOROTHY REAY.

Harrison looked at the date on the letter, and thought, and then said to himself:

"To-morrow! That's to-day! This afternoon as ever was! My soul! Damn her!"

He said, too, "Aren't women nuisances?" meaning all mere women, not the one angel above the lot of them. Then he was sorry for the nurse, rather. It seemed a shame that good-looking women—after all, she was almost handsome—should slave and grow tired and old in their work, this July weather. Again he read the letter, and decided that she must understand bet-

ter the values of their light acquaintance, and that it was now over. That afternoon he drove his two-seater to the gates of the hospital and waited there at three o'clock.

At three o'clock she came, cloaked and bonneted, instead of in mufti, and her expression at seeing him almost took away his breath. She was red and white, bereft of speech and speaking, all in one minute.

"Get in," he said, smiling, with a good face on the matter, "for if you've only two hours, we won't waste time. I'm going to take you out of town."

"How perfectly splendid!" she kept repeating. "You're a dear boy, really, Lance. You're a brick to come at once."

"We'll talk a lot," he said, "when we're out of the traffic, shall we?"

So he drove in silence for a while, during which he thought of all the things he would say, and the way he would say them. And there is no doubt but that the nurse was making her plans, too.

In half an hour, they were into clear country, running along white roads between hedges, and Dorothy had begun to talk in earnest.

"Lance," she said, "had you quite forgotten me or don't you really care any more?"

He stopped the car under a wayside tree, turned in his seat, and faced her.

"What do you mean?"

"Mean?"

"Look here," he said. "I must know exactly, please. Just how far do you think you can go with me, really, Dorothy?"

"Explain yourself," said the nurse stormily.

"I didn't like your letter."

"Nor I your behavior."

"What was the matter with my behavior?"

"What was the matter with my letter?"

Harrison laughed.

"Oh, Lord! Aren't we going at it? What's the matter with both of us is the question."

Watching his relaxed face, she nestled down beside him with a curious little movement.

"Yes," she murmured snugly, "we're both making fools of ourselves, perhaps. We don't want to quarrel, do we, Lance?"

"You've never used my Christian name till now, Dorothy."

"Haven't I? You've used mine."

"Yes," he said, "yes—yes. I wonder why men are such asses?"

"What do you mean, again?"

"I wish I'd never wanted to kiss you, you know. Or, wanting doesn't matter so much, but I wish I'd never done it."

She leaned close to him and whispered:

"Don't you ever want to do it again, then?"

He stared down impatiently into her sun-flushed face.

"No," he said coldly, "no."

She blushed dully, but went on with her coaxing:

"Sure—quite certain? Not *ever*?"

"Sure as sure."

She drew back a little, shaking her shoulders under the cloak. Her anger stammered in her voice like an inarticulate thing striving to release itself in speech, and denied.

"What's the matter with you?" she pleaded.

"Nothing," he replied. "I may have been a fool, but I thought you knew."

"Knew you for a fool?" she said smartly. "Perhaps I did."

"I thought you knew," he said, without a flicker, "that a man is hardly ever serious about—about fooling. You mustn't get serious. That's the worst of women. But I thought you knew too much."

She sat very silent, and he could

not read her face; it was red, but stony, without expression. Her eyes looked far away, and she bit her lips into a long line like a folded seam.

She made him, for no reason that he could think of, a little uneasy. There was about her some intention, some meaning, that he could not fathom; though there was, too, some desire that he could fathom, and he was sorry and ashamed for it and wished that he need not be.

"We're pretty good friends, aren't we, Dorothy?" he said, laying his hand over hers.

She turned to him swiftly.

"Kiss and be friends, then."

There seemed to the young man only one thing that he could do, and he did it; he put his lips lightly to her cheek, avoiding her offered mouth.

"Now shake hands," he said. "It's a shame to spoil our run, if you don't motor often."

"You must know," she replied, "that I never get a chance to motor. You know I'm poor."

"I'm so sorry," he said, putting his hands on the wheel.

"Wait. Don't drive on yet. Do you know what you made me think, Lance?"

"No."

"You made me think you wanted to marry me."

"Well," he replied, "I'm sorry."

"What are you going to do?" said she sulkily.

"Do?"

"About it?"

"Nothing."

The woman knew enough to realize that she was playing a stupid game, doomed to failure, and that she must stop.

"Forgive me," she murmured. "I'm not myself. I've been overworked—and so worried, and I've thought about you so much. Please forget all I've said."

"Willingly," he cried, relieved.

"You don't want to marry yet," she said, stealing a glance at his face to try her ground. "You've had a bad experience, poor boy! You want freedom. Don't think I don't understand. I *do*. And it was sweet of you to come for me this afternoon. You're the best friend I have."

He started the car.

"Only," she pleaded, "go on being a friend. Promise me that. Yes, promise—promise. Let us see each other sometimes."

"I mayn't be in town much longer."

"Where are you going?"

"I've taken a shoot for the autumn."

"Where?"

"Oh, a long way off."

"You've sold Ironsides, then?"

"Yes."

"Lance, you'll be having house parties for the shooting. Can't you invite me one week-end? I—I could take my holiday soon."

"I believe it would be impossible."

"Why?"

"It wouldn't be proper, would it?"

"You know best," she replied with an attractive submission.

Uneasy as he had been at her temper, he became afraid of her in submissive mood. It was almost as if she said: "You have a right over me; do as you will." He had no right and he did not want it; he feared to have the onus of it thrust upon him. Everything she said and did, every inflection of her voice, seemed somehow to suggest, if not to establish, a claim.

"Where shall we stop for tea?" he asked. "I have a basket."

She showed great spirits.

"What? Tea? You dear! We'll stop just anywhere. It must be soon, anyhow, mustn't it? I suppose nearly half my beautiful afternoon has flown away. Let's stop just *here*."

So, in the shadow of a little roadside copse, they halted, and he pulled out

the tea hamper with which his man had provided him.

"I hope," he said, with a smile that was rather an effort, "that I've brought all the right things."

She pouted smilingly.

"What? Didn't you pack it for me yourself? Didn't you choose the things I used to like at Ironsides? Or didn't you remember? You beast!"

"Don't remind me of Ironsides!"

She laid her hand on his for an instant, and he recollected the touch of it at once—the strong, cold hand that once had been able to stir his pulse a little. Now, gently, but inexorably, he shook it off.

"How much tea do I put in, Dorothy? Or here's a thermos flask of coffee and another flask of iced coffee. Shall we have that, instead?"

But she would potter about with the teapot, pretending to a great enthusiasm over the infusion and admiring, with girlish gush that might have been Stelle Gatherby's, the picnic tea set. She irritated him, and all the while he was thinking:

"Oh, stow it! Stow it! You're too tall and big for that type of muck! You're too old! Don't be an ass!"

At last he exclaimed it—"Don't be an ass, Dorothy!"—and she desisted suddenly, going pale and sitting down with a feeling of anticlimax and tragedy, too.

He felt it in the air, and hastened to fill her plate with strawberries and to open a jar of cream.

"Let's be jolly," he said. "There's only an hour more, anyway. We shall simply have to lick back."

"Supposing you made me break all the rules they ever made," she dared, "and they wouldn't take me back, what would you do, Lance?"

He said crossly: "I dunno. Is it a riddle? It isn't going to happen, anyway."

The nurse recovered her common sense with an effort.

"Of course not. I was joking." She turned her head and looked into the dark copse as if searching for something, but it was to hide from him that her eyes were moist.

"I see your name sometimes," she said presently, "in the weekly papers we have in the nurses' sitting room. I suppose you are awf'ly gay now, Lance?"

"How do you mean—gay?"

"Dances and dinner parties. And you were at Ascot with Lady—Lady Albright, wasn't it? And at Henley and Ranelagh."

"How good of you to take an interest in me!"

"Don't rot!"

"I'm not."

She paused.

"You were at a dance at the Ritz the other day, too, given by a Mrs. Waymore."

"Yes, I was there, too."

"That's what I mean when I say you're awf'ly gay."

"My dear child," he said, with the patronage of a very young man, "a few dances and dinners don't constitute a gay life, in my opinion."

"I'd like to know what does, then," she sighed.

He pulled his hat down to shade his eyes, and looked, as she had done, into the darkness of the little copse. He saw the lost places in the green-black shade.

"I was gay, once. I didn't care a cuss for anybody."

"And now, Lance?"

"The devil of it is that it can never last."

"Do you—do you, then?"—she laughed with a strain—"care for anybody now, then?"

"Oh, I'm older," he replied cautiously.

They sat in silence for a while, and

he was bored. At last he jumped up, exclaiming:

"By Jove, my dear girl, we'll have to hustle for it!" and she knew that her hour, for to-day, was over.

She helped him to tumble the things pell-mell into the hamper, and got briskly back into the car.

They began again to traverse the road they had come. It was like traveling toward a full table and turning back hungry after a mere look at it; that was how the woman felt. But she did not despair of him; she knew that any one of a dozen chances—a second's madness, an extra glass of wine, a moment's pity or a moment's passion—may bring a man into a woman's hands and leave him there like a fish, gasping for the water again, but stranded upon the bank. She remembered that he had kissed her.

As they drove, he asked suddenly:

"Dorothy, would you really like a white fox fur?"

She was delighted.

"Would I?" she laughed. "Wouldn't I!"

"I'll send you one." He did not add, "if I may," because he understood that she was not the sort to make difficulties. He had met the Dorothy Reay sisterhood many times in his young, soiled, crowded life.

She clapped her hands.

"And I'll wear it next time you ask me out to dinner. I love fur on a bare neck, don't you?"

"I say, doesn't any one else ask you out to dinner?"

She pondered swiftly for a second whether she should reply: "Oh, lots!" or, "Not a soul, Lance dear," and finally she said: "That's asking!"

"Oh, well," the young man smiled, "never mind."

"I don't believe you would mind with whom I went out to dinner, Lance."

Harrison accelerated, and the car rushed a hill.

"Would you, Lance?"

He thought he heard her query on the wind, but he pretended ignorance; the pace they made was fast enough to be excuse, and he kept it up. He was tired of importunities, and he felt that he had not deserved them. He wanted badly to get back to town and lose Dorothy. He vowed to himself that never again would he see her, and that if she wrote those sickly letters again, they should return to her by the next post. Now and again, as they drove, he called to her, "I won't let you be late," and she called back, "I wish you would," but he took no notice of her repeated implications.

They reached the hospital with two minutes to spare.

"It has been delightful to see you," he said carelessly. "Good-by!"

"What shall I think of you doing to-night, Lance?"

"Don't trouble to think of me at all, if you're wise," he replied. "I'm not worth it, honestly. Good-by."

She would not go in until he left, so he started the car, and felt her eyes following him through the traffic. He dived down a side street to get rid of the impression, and presently lost it. He felt a certain despair upon him, an anger and a sickness at himself. Following an impulse without questioning, he drove straight to Curzon Street.

He had, during the past fortnight, made plans too preconceived and wise for youth to follow. There was the shooting box already taken in Yorkshire, and the Waymores had been the first guests bidden for the twelfth. It was there, in his own house, that he would ask Dorice the great question, and give all he had and all he was into her hands. The weeks that would elapse before that day would be weeks of devoted thought of her, of a curious, high preparation.

That July afternoon destroyed his premature plans. It made him sick for

her, for the look of her eyes and the touch of her hand and the sound of her voice. From the hospital, then, he drove to Curzon Street, and asked for Dorice.

She was in.

Alone?

"No, sir," the servant replied. "There are guests, sir."

"Ask Miss Waymore," said Harrison, "if she would be good enough to speak to me alone."

The servant led him up to the second floor, to the room that was Dorice's own. It was like her, somehow, although she had not furnished it. It had a desk littered with signs of letter writing, many cushions, flowers, a prevailing chintz, and photographs in plenty. Among the photographs was a new one of Dorice herself.

He found it in a moment, for indeed he could not have missed any trace of her, and he took it to gaze upon. The soul of Dorice had been caught and registered; there she was pictured, as in life, young and royal, proud and pure, too beautiful altogether, thought the humble adorer, for any man's possession. He wondered at his daring, while hoping passionately for its culmination. Hope seemed unreal, yet was the sole reason for continued existence.

He held the portrait reverently and sighed over it and smiled at it. Dorice caught him so, when she came into the room and shut the door behind her.

"Oh—you——" she faltered doubtfully.

Harrison was looking from the portrait to her.

"Didn't they tell you it was I?"

"Oh, yes. Yes, of course. You're looking at my new picture?"

"Will you give me one, Dorice?"

"If you like," she said. "Oh, yes. There are some spare copies here," and she went to the desk.

Harrison stood by her silently while she found one.

"Shall I sign it?" she asked.

"If you will, Dorice."

She took up a pen, sat down before the desk, and was about to write, when he stopped her.

"Wait. What—what are you going to write, Dorice?"

"I suppose the—the usual thing."

"What is the usual thing?" whispered Harrison.

She looked up and knew what was in his face; her heart beat thickly; the pen shook with the shaking of her hand.

"Just—just—perhaps—'Yours sincerely, Dorice Waymore.'"

"Then wait. Sign it afterward—after I've asked you something. Dorice, I meant to ask you presently—when you came in August with your people. But suddenly, to-day, I couldn't keep it in any longer. I must know. I mean, you must know—I love you, Dorice."

"Do you?" said Dorice, in a tiny voice.

"Better than anything in the world. I didn't even know love was like this. It will never end. Oh, Dorice, I love you so that I would just die for you to kiss me!"

"Well," said Dorice, halfway between laughter and tears, "don't die. You needn't. Because——"

She lifted up her face. It seemed to him even then too fair to be touched, but the man broke through the worshiper, and the desired was in his arms, and he was kissing her as he had often dreamed, and they were both in paradise.

He knelt down and put his head against her heart.

"Dorice," he said, "is it real?"

"Yes," whispered Dorice.

"Are you absolutely sure, darling?"

"Absolutely."

"When were you first sure?"

"I shan't tell you," said Dorice.

The boy was mazy with the sweetness of her embrace; he turned his head and kissed her again and again. She felt the warmth of his mouth through her filmy frock.

"Tell me," he begged, "tell me, darling!"

"Well," said Dorice, pink as the other roses in the room, "stay there, then, and don't look at me. It was a very long while ago."

"The first swim we had in the sea?"

"Before then."

"When I looked at you at lunch?"

"Yes," murmured Dorice.

"How wonderful!" he thought aloud.

Dorice was jealous then for his part of the story.

"And you, too, Lance?"

"That was when I began, too. From the very first. And ever since, I've thought of no one but you, and I've dreamed of you. And listen—I've prayed for you, though I wasn't a praying sort, Dorice. But I will be now, if you like."

"You're to be just what you want to be," said Dorice shyly. "I'd always trust you."

He got up and put his arm around her and led her to a chesterfield, where they sat down side by side.

"You can't go back to your mother and the others," he said. "I won't let you go. I'll keep you here with me."

"I shall have to go some time," said Dorice happily.

"But not yet, because there're so many things to ask you. The first question is: How soon will you be ready?"

"What does 'soon' mean?"

"To-morrow."

"No, no! Good gracious, Lance, no!"

"Next week?"

"No, Lance. I won't be nearly ready."

"Next month?"

"No. I'm sure not, really."

"Then, dear, darling girl, can't we

make a two months' limit, for God's sake?"

Before she could begin again with her demurring, he kissed her into silence; he cajoled her with the most specious of all reasons and thrilled her with the loveliest of all fears. He persuaded her to listen, and promise, and long. He was a triumphant boy when presently he gayly brought her the coveted portrait to sign and the pen to sign it with, and, decreeing that she should just write "Dorice," watched her do it.

"Of all the world," he said, "you're 'Dorice' only to me. You're my Dorice forever and ever. Oh, my God, I do love you, darling! My own, isn't that a miserable old two months?"

CHAPTER XVII.

When they had sat, for much longer than they knew, together on the chesterfield in Dorice's room, asking each other questions, looking into each other's eyes, holding each other's hands, they heard a step on the parquet floor outside, and the handle turned slowly enough to serve as warning. Mrs. Waymore came in with an innocent face, and cried:

"My dear, dear boy! Is it you who have taken Dorice away all this time? And why didn't I know you were here? I have a mind to be very angry with you."

"Don't be," said he happily, "although I want to take Dorice away altogether."

"Good heavens!" the lady gasped very properly, and she billowed down upon the chesterfield. She was pretty and plump and fluffy, and she looked an adorable mother for any girl.

"And very soon, if you please," the young man added.

"Oh, dear!" said Mrs. Waymore. "What audacity! Dorice, my dearest— You modern girls! And I

hadn't the slightest idea! You arrange everything so independently nowadays. I'm sure I never deceived my poor mother so!"

She laughed with the sweetest temper in the world and, drawing Dorice down, kissed her. Then she reached out a hand, took Harrison's, and let him kiss her, too. He liked it, but it struck him as quite an amusing little ceremony.

"You aren't very angry, Mrs. Waymore?"

"Of course she's not!" said Dorice.

"My dear children," replied Mrs. Waymore, "I'm so surprised that I haven't had time to be angry yet, even if I'm going to be. My darling child, I don't know what your father will say! He didn't want you to marry for years and years." She sighed, and continued: "I suppose young people can't be wise. It's cruel to ask them."

"Shocking cruel," said Harrison.

"Oh, yes," said the mother-in-law elect, assuming a charming petulance. "I know you! You young men are all alike! Parents are always hard-hearted if they won't give their dear girls away to you like tea and muffins. And I suppose you want to hurry this poor child till she doesn't know whether she's on her head or her heels."

"We fixed a time limit of two months," he answered anxiously.

"Two months!" Mrs. Waymore exclaimed. "It can't be done! You must wait at least till the first of the pheasant shooting is over. Really you must, dears."

"We don't care tuppence about the pheasants," said the lover.

"Well," said the lady, "then you must, if you're going to be a son-in-law of mine. Have you arranged everything, or have you still something left to talk over?" And she smiled roguishly.

"You're a dear," Harrison replied, escorting her to the door.

She went downstairs to see if her husband had come in. He had, and she found him in the smoke room with a belated tea tray at his elbow.

The smile had faded from the mother's face; her eyes were meditative, and two lines made furrows between her penciled brows.

"Henry," she said quietly, "young Harrison has proposed to Dorice. He's here now."

Waymore looked at her.

"And Dorice?"

"My dear," his wife replied, "she's in love. They're both head over heels. Everything's settled."

"Then," said Waymore, leaning back again with a smile of appreciation, "that's all right."

"I think it is all right?" said his wife questioningly. "We can thoroughly approve?"

"My good girl, the boy has twenty-five thousand a year—and whatever that Cheshire place brought. I think it was a hundred and fifty thousand pounds."

"I like him."

"Quite a good chap."

"He'll be different when he settles down. I'm sure he'll be a very nice husband."

"Why should he be 'different?' What's wrong?"

"People get hold of stories, don't they?"

"What stories?"

"Some one said he is often seen about with some woman—a nurse. I heard it was the one who nursed his wife."

Waymore laughed.

"Is she nice looking?"

"I expect so."

"Well, good God, my dear, I always wanted Dorice to have the best, but I never expected to get a saint from heaven for her, and she wouldn't take one if I did."

"Oh," said Mrs. Waymore, "one

doesn't, of course, believe half of what one hears."

"No, no; it's all perfect rubbish."

"Of course," said Mrs. Waymore, plaintively, "he *has* been married before. It's a fact and can't be denied."

Waymore replied:

"Well, I don't think things ought to be raked over. The marriage, notoriously, must have been unhappy. It's not kind to be always talking about it. One drops that sort of thing. After all, he's a very good sort of chap, and he has twenty-five thousand a year."

"I heard he sold the Cheshire place because people wouldn't know him in the neighborhood."

"Their loss," said Dorice's father, picking up his evening paper.

"Of course. But perhaps Dorice ought——"

"Well, my dear, it's hardly kind of us to want to prejudice her—and entirely unnecessary, in my opinion."

"Do you think it would prejudice her if she knew?"

"Well, do you?"

"Girls are so silly, at first."

"Precisely," said Dorice's father. "I'll have a talk with Harrison, of course; and I shall advise him to tell Dorice of his former marriage at a propitious moment. But there's no reason to tell her *now*. Wait till she's been engaged a while, and the presents are arriving and the invitations out. She'll be so busy she'll hardly give it a thought. After all, it isn't worth thinking of, is it, dear?"

"I agree with you, Henry. It isn't as if—— Of course, if there were really anything to object to, we should object——"

"That goes without saying."

"But as it is——"

"It's a great thing to get Dorice well settled, you know, Hilda. After all, she's got practically nothing."

"Ah, that reminds me," cried the mother, her woman's head already

turned to the joys of delicious preparation. "I suppose we shall get her really everything she wants? There's no limit, is there, Henry?"

"Of course not," said Dorice's father with real feeling. "The dear little girl is to have everything."

"Then," said Mrs. Waymore joyously, "I shall begin at once," and she billowed out.

Harrison was still in the little sitting room upstairs when Mrs. Waymore returned to it. She came up to him, squeezed his hand, and murmured:

"My dear boy, we're quite alone to-night. Come back and dine with us at eight." And she looked at her ecstatic daughter; adding softly, "I've told your father, dear. Look into the smoke room, Lance, on your way down."

The lover went down, and Waymore made himself charming to him. They sat for some time talking together, and the worldly knowledge and sympathy of the elder man helped the younger one considerably. He made Harrison feel very comfortable about himself. The marriage with Maude Iron was a shadow, and only the fortune it had brought him was the substance. The past did not matter; all that mattered were the great present and the greater future. And he and Dorice would not wait for the last of the pheasant shooting.

They would be married early in September.

Once more, as she had before they had come to Curzon Street, Dorice arose early and walked to the park; and again, as on those June mornings, he waited by the same gate. Once more they walked under the trees and planned to do it every morning until—

"We shan't need to do it," said Lance joyfully.

"Was father decent?" asked Dorice.

"I hadn't a chance to ask you, at dinner."

"He was splendid."

"I know he approves of you," said Dorice shyly.

"I wonder why."

"Because you're the dearest man in the world."

Harrison knew a little better than that, misted as he was with his condition, but Waymore had made him feel so comfortable that the nature of his qualifications did not obtrude itself upon his satisfaction. True, as he walked down leafy ways with Dorice on this lovely morning, the first morning of their betrothal, her words reminded him that there was still something unsaid, something to tell that half took on the nature of a confession. But Waymore had said:

"By the way—excuse the allusion—I think you have been married before. The marriage relation—it's a very queer one—an unprecedented relation, in fact. You may or may not have learned that. I'm sure it's not my business—nobody's but your own, my dear fellow. What I mean is that your private affairs are your own, though people always have talked and always will. Only, I do think it might—er—ultimately be wiser—you'll know best about that—to inform Dorice, perhaps, at your own time and in your own way. I'm sure it'll be the best way. Before marriage or—er—after—"

When Dorice's father had said this with a great deal of understanding and no little meaning, the young man had caught at the idea. Why, after all, could he not blot out that regrettable, that shameful page? Why should it remain open before him all his life?

As he walked in the park, the morning after, he half wondered, "Shall I tell her now?" but drew back, as if instinct warned him.

He looked at her, young and straight, sincere and proud. She would never

stoop to the base thing; and he was afraid, as if already he saw the scorn in her face. It was too much for him to tell her. And as for himself, he could have forgotten; memory would not have troubled him much.

Must he, then, remember?

He left the question unanswered for the present. There was much time. It could be put aside; and he put it aside for a sudden thought that was wholly pleasure.

"Dorice, Dorice, have you thought? I must buy you an engagement ring!"

They looked at each other.

"So you must! I hadn't thought of it."

But she had, and she had decided upon the usual diamonds.

"Oh, joy!" said Harrison. "Can you come and buy it this morning, sweet?"

"You must go by yourself and choose some to be sent to me."

"Is that the etiquette of the thing?" he asked, grinning.

So he went, later that morning, to Cartier's, and ordered the selection of rings. And when they arrived, he was there, too, to watch the choosing.

It was very delightful.

When she had taken the most beautiful and expensive ring of the lot, and when they were alone again in that blessed, quiet sitting room of hers, she asked him suddenly:

"Lance, are you very rich?"

"Tolerably," he answered.

"You can afford *this*?" She turned her hand about to make the sunlight play on the jewel.

"I should jolly well hope so, darling, if I'm to buy *all* your rings and your frocks and furs forever and ever more."

"I should like to be extravagant," said Dorice. "We aren't really rich, you know. We're only temporarily well off."

"You shall be extravagant."

"How extravagant?"

"I arranged with your father to settle two thousand a year on you."

"Lance! Have you so much?"

"I have lots more, sweetheart."

"I didn't know," said Dorice.

"Why should you know? It doesn't matter, either, does it?"

"I'd love you without a farthing, Lance. You do know that?"

"Don't I! Because we loved each other when we'd only got a bathing suit to our backs, and that was jolly damp. We hadn't even a pocket to keep sixpence in."

"You're absurd."

"But we did, didn't we?"

"We did. I could almost wish you hadn't a farthing, Lance. Only I do love being extravagant."

"Why should you wish I hadn't a farthing, then, silly sweetheart?"

"Lots of women—girls like Stelle, you know—will think I am marrying you for money."

"Well," said Harrison slowly, "supposing you were."

"I wouldn't. Does it seem so very extraordinary? You *know* I wouldn't!"

"Yes. I know *you* wouldn't. But, Dorice, tell me—what do you really think? Is it so very beastly to marry for money?"

"It's the lowest thing on earth."

"But if the contracting parties—I mean the poorer one—really honestly means to render all the value possible to the richer one?"

"Oh, what a loathsome deal!"

"Strong language," said the young man, not facing her.

"There is nothing in a woman's vocabulary strong enough! I'd have to know yours."

"What do you know about my vocabulary, darling impudence?"

"Only," said Dorice charmingly, "that I quite like it."

Harrison looked out of the window. It was quiet, but beyond were streets and streets of men and women occu-

pied with questions such as his; who had played some part of which they were ashamed; who hid a sore; who had a page that they would fain have torn from their books. What did such people do in the end? He wondered. The unsatisfied wonder grew oppressive. He turned back to Dorice, who stood by his shoulder, and asked:

"Dorice, you're very hard on ordinary people."

"I don't mean to be. But what we were talking of is loathsome; it's wicked. It's selling what no one has a right to sell."

"What's that?"

"A soul."

"Dear Dorice, is it? Isn't it only selling a body?"

Dorice had not attained to the frankness of most of her contemporaries; she blushed excessively.

"It's horrid," she said.

"Mayn't there be circumstances——"

"No, there mayn't," said she.

"No, listen. Mayn't there be circumstances in which it's very hard for a person to resist doing such a thing?"

"No, Lance. Because it's crooked."

"Well, mayn't it sometimes be almost irresistible to be crooked?"

"It's the easiest thing in the world to be straight. It's the first thing a person knows how to be. Don't you see?"

"I don't see that it's crooked," said Harrison almost doggedly. "It's just a deal, more understood than expressed, for the sake of prettiness and decency."

"Lance, it's so ugly!" And she added: "But why are we talking of it? Things like that don't concern us, and they never will. We're lucky, Lance, aren't we?"

"We're awf'ly lucky, my Dorice; at least, I am."

"I, too."

"No," he said despondently, "not you. You're not to think great things

of me, Dorice; you're to be prepared for shocks. But listen. Whatever I have been, I won't be any more. From now on, I'm in your hands, and you can make anything you like out of me. Mold me, Dorice, just as you want me to be. Forever and ever, all that I do and think is to be for you."

Dorice was a little puzzled and fluttered; but he was not the first young man who had been in love with her. She had heard the things men said to women in such cases before, although never, until now, had she been so glad to hear. She accepted all he vowed to her, without its meaning; she thought of it vaguely and sweetly as a rather beautiful formula of justification made and believed in by lovers, which formula, uttered by the right man to the right girl, endured until the end. Love laid his fingers upon her eager eyelids and blinded her.

He began to talk of the Yorkshire shoot he had taken.

"If you like, we'll keep it, and a town house. You'll decide when you come for the twelfth. But there's something I want you to do for me before then, just as if you were already Mrs. Lance Harrison. Doesn't that sound ripping? Say it does. I want you to engage servants for me. Will you, dearest? Your mother'll help you, won't she? I'm so useless, so at sea about these things. You'll do it, won't you?"

Dorice, in her domestic pose, was the prettiest thing. She exclaimed with delight at her responsibility, and sat down at once at her desk, before which, only yesterday, he had first kissed her, to make calculation. In ten minutes she had engaged, on paper, five women servants and a handy man for the house; had inquired about the garden and estimated the labor; had investigated the shopping resources and explained the ever-present helpfulness of the country woman's salvation, the

stores. From such discussion, it became clear that, before the twelfth, Dorice must see the shooting box. And when that important point had been fixed, the list of guests was detailed for her approval.

Dorice's mind ran smoothly down it, until she came to the names of Lady Albright and Stelle Gatherby.

"She's such a pal of yours," Harrison said, with the stupidity of man. "You'd like her, darling?"

"It would be very nice," Dorice replied.

"And Lady Albright's a sport. She always brings her gun; she told me so. She'll come out with us, I expect. Then we'll have Hansom and the others, and Lady Albright and her niece, and your mother and father."

"And me."

"You're included in the 'we,' Mrs. Harrison. Are you happy, darling? Will that be all right?"

"It will be excellent," replied Dorice after a pause, "but perhaps—I think it likely—Stelle won't be able to come."

"I've made sure of that."

"Oh—have you?"

"Yes. You see, I knew you'd want her, so I asked Lady Albright, when I called there yesterday."

"Oh."

"So that's all right."

"That's all right, then."

"Then, if there's no blue penciling to be done to our list, will you put on your hat, sweetest, and come out to lunch?"

While Dorice changed her frock and put on one of her favorite white hats, she was thinking:

"What must girls like Stelle be made of?"

CHAPTER XVIII.

Dorice's mother, when appealed to on the score of the early excursion into Yorkshire, made some *démur*. She was one of those women who never

agree to any project in a simple and straightforward manner; so, although she was one of the idlest of women, and although, it being the end of the season, her engagement book was nearly blank, she had a great deal to say on the subject, all futile. While Dorice bore with her with equanimity, knowing her case, Harrison was cast into a mood of despair by the lady's intricate pros and cons.

"I don't know, dear girl," said Mrs. Waymore, smooth, pink, and billowy. "I don't understand why you and Lance should think it vital to drag me up into the wilds and down again when I'm fagged out and really ought to go to the sea for a week or so."

"The moors would do you just as much good, mother."

"I dare say," replied Mrs. Waymore, with the withering incredulity affected by the middle-aged for the confusion of the young. "I dare say, my love. However, perhaps I'm the best judge of my own health, after all."

"You look topping, mother."

"I should certainly not allow myself to give way, with all your wedding to undertake, dear. That's another reason why I really don't see how you can spare another hour from London, more than the few days from the twelfth to the eighteenth. I'm not sure that we ought not to let your father go alone, after all."

"We should quite destroy the balance, mother."

"Oh, Lance could ask some one else."

"But we are going, aren't we, mother?"

"Well, we've accepted, Dorice. But dear Lance must forgive us if I cancel the arrangement at the last."

"I would never forgive you," said Dorice, with some heat.

"You should control yourself, dear," said Mrs. Waymore. "I shall continue to say that I don't think you have time

for any visits at all. You really ought to give yourself up entirely to your dressmakers."

"What do dressmakers matter?"

"I think you are awfully ungrateful, dear, to ask that, when your father has given you *carte blanche*—which he can't afford—for your things. I should have been delighted with such a *trousseau*."

"No doubt you would, mother." Then Dorice uttered with sincerity the belief that all youth holds about middle age: "I don't believe people loved each other as much in your time, mother."

Mrs. Waymore sat with a smile on her face, and the smile grew softer and softer, and a light came to her eyes, until she looked, barring her extra weight, nearly as young as the girl. And it was these words of Dorice's, with the memories they evoked, that brought about her capitulation more quickly than would otherwise have befallen, although she still held a few forts. Thus:

"Of course, Dorice, you'll be leaving your father altogether so shortly that I rather wonder you want to make this visit—even though it may be short—just now."

"We need be only away one night, mother. Lance wants me just to see if I like the place, and if I do, he'll return."

"Well, I don't see why that can't be decided when we go for the grouse."

"Of course, mother, if you don't want to come, Lance and I could go alone."

"My dear Dorice! My good, demented child! You know as well as I do that it isn't possible."

"Then, mother, will you come?"

"If I must, I will," said Mrs. Waymore. "Write to your pertinacious young man, child, and tell him we will spare exactly forty-eight hours."

The girl crept up and hugged her, and cried joyously:

"Now you're a darling mummy, and why didn't you say so at first?"

She wrote:

Darling, we're coming, for exactly forty-eight hours, mother says. But when once you and I get her there, she's at our mercy, isn't she? I do long to be out on the moors with you. I'm sick of stuffy London, and every one's gone, and it's so hot. It's now the third, isn't it? I never know the date. Well, my plan is that we shall stay on with you till the others come, and father can join us. Isn't it a gorgeous plan? I shall leave all sorts of surreptitious orders with the servants, and when mother is coerced, all up in the wilds, as she says, into writing home for more clothes, she'll be surprised to find how quickly they're all packed and labeled and sent. She may even note my writing on the labels! Let me know what you think of all this.

The young man replied:

It's gorgeous, clever darling. Have I the luck to marry a genius as well as the most beautiful girl in the world?

Dorice's was not the only letter of moment he received that morning.

There was one from Dorothy Reay.

It lay, all unworthy, touching Dorice's, and he separated them quickly. Dorothy used mauve paper with a heliotrope scent and a flaring monogram—of one letter only, D—printed on the envelope flap. The initial appeared also on the top left-hand corner of the note paper. Her writing was round and characterless for a woman of guile.

This letter of hers, like the last, reproached and appealed. It began: "Dear Lance," and continued:

I know that you forget all about me. Men are horrible. "Out of sight, out of mind" is very true of them. Isn't it so? Have you *really* forgotten all about the days at Ironsides, when you had simply no one but me to speak to, poor boy? And if you have, because you are less dull now, is it altogether fair to assume that I have forgotten them, too? I have received the white fox skin, and it is lovely, but when on earth am I to wear it unless you come and take me out to dinner? You are to write and invite me *at once*! You are a very naughty boy to

DOROTHY.

"Oh, Gawd!" Harrison groaned when he read the tasteless effusion. Like many a wiser man who has found a greater goddess, he was now amazed at himself for ever having felt the attraction of the lesser one. He was sorry, now, for having offered the white fox skin, and sorrier that he had fulfilled his promise. He had remembered, and ordered a big shop to send it, actually since his engagement to Dorice. But there was nothing in that, and the woman ought to know it.

That Dorice would know it, he was sure. He sat staring angrily at the mauve letter and, obeying an impulse of disgust, tore it up.

"I'll answer it by and by—for good," he promised himself.

Meanwhile, he was leaving town. He would leave it to-morrow—this very day—if he could persuade Mrs. Waymore to depart from her leisurely habits of decision and be rushed up to Yorkshire at once.

He hurried around to Curzon Street. Already the servants were swathing much of the furniture in saddlebags, for the house was to be given up in a week, and Mrs. Waymore, resigned to a momentary energy, was directing operations.

The lady heard the young man's devout pleading with the same resignation that she was exercising toward the furniture.

"I don't know, dear boy," she kept repeating. "I really don't know. You see how busy I am. Try to guess at a fraction of the things I positively must do. How you expect me to rush off to-day I cannot think. Are you suggesting that we take the late train?"

"Or—or—" he stammered with temerity. "Well, yes, if you won't go before lunch. It's now nearly eleven."

He wanted badly to get away from London and Dorothy, being young enough, and conscientious enough now, to feel oppressed by her. The only

thing for which to be grateful was the rigid rule of the Metropolitan Hospital, which so curtailed her movements.

"My good young man!" Mrs. Waymore exclaimed helplessly.

Dorice came in, and fell to the task of persuading her, and suddenly the lady's mood veered.

"After all," she said, with her nice middle-aged roguishness, "it would be rather fun. Your father will come home and find us flown."

They went at midday.

Harrison had telegraphed their coming, with full and anxious instructions to the caretakers, and a car met them. At the house, a supper—a banquet—was ready, and Dorice took the head of the table and Harrison the foot, while the mother-in-law-to-be sat between them, very mischievous. Never had Harrison been so happy as when he saw his adored girl sitting there, in his house, at his table, as if already house and table were her own.

And a rapt mood fell upon Dorice, too, in which the viands seemed fairies' food, and the mediocre white wine might have been drawn from the springs of all creation. She felt already as if the gold ring of magic had joined the diamonds on her left-hand third finger.

She had wondered what was this life that made two one. She had longed to know what kept the eyes of two upon one star, the feet of two upon one road, the hands of two linked beyond severance. Was it forever, this love that now possessed them as lovers? Was it the passion of bodies? Was it the passion of souls? Was it the end of youth's eternal quest in the maturity of marriage? Was it the keeping of honor? Was it the fruit of love? Was it children?

All these things Dorice, like other young girls, had asked herself, and yearned to answer. But now that she was so close upon the answer, she

yearned no more, but was content to wait.

She looked across at Harrison, and under the clustered candle shades, he was looking at her. She thought: "He wonders, too." But he did not, for, manlike, he knew more about love, or loves, than she did. But he was glad that she did not know; it rejoiced him that he should be the first to lead her into Eden and show her the world's glory viewed therefrom. If there had been an element of uncertainty in his breast that night, it would have been fear. She was so white that he might well have been afraid.

The elderly woman sitting between the young pair, between the fires whose warmth reached and stirred her like a hot wind from a past summer, knew what each was thinking. For the young man, she had, from her experience, toleration; it was like male arrogance to want to be first and to claim a child for a bride. Gossip, as gossip does, had told her various tales of Harrison, and her mind was open, though unbiased, to believe them. If her daughter had wanted a virtuous husband, the mother would have explained to her the foolishness of her vanity. But as the girl did not speak, the mother spoke not, either; and though she could have answered much of the bride elect's wonder, after the way of mothers, she elected to leave that to the bridegroom.

Although she knew in her heart what each was thinking, and although their thoughts woke her memories—more sacred than her daughter would have believed—her own thoughts were concerned mainly with figures.

The figures were big—twenty-five thousand pounds and more! She had her wondering too: "How much more?"

She was extremely satisfied. Having, long ago, known all the pretty fancies of youth now enjoyed by Dorice, she knew, too, now, the sober judg-

ments of middle age. Glamour was like a beautiful day, upon which the sun would set in clouds of fire. But twenty-five thousand pounds a year endured; it stood solid. When women, even women in love, had passed through two or three years of marriage, they woke up to this and were gratified and glad.

So thought Mrs. Waymore. She was looking, too, with her keen appraisal, about the house. It was exactly the kind of country house to have—not too big, but big enough, and extremely comfortable; decidedly more than a mere shooting box. The paneling and the fireplaces, and one or two doors in the place, must be extremely valuable; the grounds were well laid out; Henry had told her that the shooting would be extraordinarily good. It would be a place to which the right people would covet invitations. And in town, the young couple had better take that little Curzon Street house which the duchess was anxious to sublet altogether. It was high time that all these things were decided.

Smilingly she let them wrap her up after supper and leave her on the veranda, high and dry, while they wandered away into the darkness of gardens wet with dew. She laid all these financial and domestic plans while they were occupied with others, all about themselves.

They had the honeymoon to discuss, and it was so different, so much dearer, that it roused in him no reminiscence of that other. Only, when he asked her, "Where shall we really go?" he had again the sense that anywhere would do. It was not the same sense, though. Whereas, before, he had told himself, "Anywhere will do to be bored in," now it was, "Anywhere will do to be happy in."

And he said: "Anywhere, with you, my darling. I don't care where."

"Lance, how would you like to go

out West—to those wild places you loved so much—somewhere—I have no geography—but *you* know."

But the lost places called no more to him; their trumpet voices were muted and very far away.

"I don't want it, darling. I'd rather be at home with you. We might just motor somewhere—anywhere—and come back here for the hunting. You ride, Dorice?"

"When I can. But we can't afford the car *and* horses in London."

"You're going to have a stableful now, then. You're going to hunt three days a week."

"What joy!" said Dorice.

"In case your mother comes to find us, say 'good night' now, dear."

Dorice was a long while folded in his arms, while their mouths clung together and her hair brushed against his eyelids and he loved her terribly. Both thought of the many warm, dark evenings to be spent in this dear garden, and of the delicious days ahead—a month ahead.

"We put it off far too long, darling," said Harrison, with longing in his voice.

"Much, much too long!" Dorice whispered, with passion in hers.

But, reminding them of their bounden duty to her and to all society, Mrs. Waymore's call came trailing nearer, nearer, through the dark garden.

"My dears, where are you? Lance—Dorice—do answer. Where are you? I want to go to bed."

Mrs. Waymore went to bed, and at the same time she shepherded Dorice to her room, where she stayed and brushed her hair for her, in the absence of their joint maid. And while she brushed it, she talked a lot of sentiment, engendered by meditation upon the dusky veranda, which the girl, being of a younger generation, thought pitifully was arrant nonsense, since how could her middle-aged mother's

love affair with her bald Henry ever have equaled the lyric of Dorice and Lance?

"My hair, my dear," said Mrs. Waymore, her head a little on one side and her eyelids drooping, as, assiduously, she brushed and brushed, "used to be every bit as long as yours; in fact, longer. And it was brighter, too. I remember your father—you'll find out how silly men are, love—used to want me to send my maid away, so that he could brush it himself. He brushed it so badly! I used to endure it gladly, though. One's so foolish when one's first married; one endures positively anything. Your father was exceedingly good looking then. Well, well, when I see all you young brides, I do wish I could have my time all over again!"

While Mrs. Waymore was delving into her dead and dusty romance, Harrison was busying himself in the smoke room with the composition of a letter to Dorothy Reay. He tore up three copies that night, and delayed the final achievement for some days. But when at last it was finished, just before the house party arrived for the twelfth, it ran:

DEAR MISS REAY: Thank you for writing to me again. It was really very good of you. As for the white fox skin, I'm sure you'll find many opportunities for wearing it. Anyway, don't wait for me to see you in it. I don't expect to be in town again before Christmas, except for my wedding, and perhaps for flying shopping expeditions with my wife. Miss Dorice Waymore is doing me the great honor of marrying me early next month, as all the illustrated weeklies, no doubt, are by this time informing you.

Therefore, the chances of our meeting again are so extremely remote that I will seize this occasion to offer you my best wishes for your welfare; and I will take your congratulations to myself for granted. Yours truly,
LANCE HARRISON.

He was pleased with the letter.

"It's damn' good," he said, reading

it. "It's a snorter, and yet it's fairly civil. The woman makes me sick, and I think this'll finish her."

When he dropped the letter into the post box in the hall, he felt that he had finished with the nurse forever.

CHAPTER XIX.

Dorice kept her mother, according to her ruthless, gleeful plan, in Yorkshire by the simple expedient of refusing to return home unless carried. When the lady had been reduced to a confused mental state in which, alternately, she pleaded with Lance to give a rather premature exhibition of his future husbandly authority, and scolded Dorice, her daughter took matters into her own hands by wiring for maid and luggage; and by the time these appendages had arrived, catching a train with most suspicious alacrity immediately on receipt of the telegram, the lady had recovered her good humor.

She thought it was rather fun.

"It's just the kind of naughty thing," she told them with a sparkle, "that I used to do when I was a girl."

"Then, mummy, sympathize with me," said Dorice; and her mother put her arms about her, and cried:

"I do, my darling, I do!"

Lady Albright and Stelle arrived on the eleventh of August, simultaneously with Henry Waymore and the other guns. Little Stelle had recovered all her soft gush, but there was a something steelier lurking behind her mousiness. Even as she kissed and hugged Dorice, and proclaimed the old house delicious and darling, she held back something that kept tumbling to her lips, to be bitten back again. But she was highly affectionate, and she begged the bride elect to exchange all secrets as soon as might be.

The dinner-table decorations, that first guest night, were Dorice's arrangement—clusters of the earliest,

most delicate chrysanthemums—but Mrs. Waymore acted as hostess. All the women wore new frocks.

The young host was engaged to be married, and therefore not capable of much introspection or retrospection, either, or he might have remembered sharply, as he sat at his table with this group of charming people, the contrast between August the eleventh this year and last year, when he had been living, sometimes like a rebellious school-boy and sometimes like a very shamed man, at Ironsides; or between August the eleventh this year and August the eleventh two years ago when he had been—Where had he been?

Working his way up the California coast on a tramp steamer.

Yes, that was it. Working his way with his rough hands, with one shirt to his back and nothing in his pockets, but happy? As happy as a wild beast. Almost as happy as to-day, when he looked, under the candle shades, at his beautiful, beautiful girl in her delicate, fine clothes.

Of all the water that had flowed under the bridge since he had worked on that tramp, he could not think while he looked at Dorice. The bridge had been built and it spanned the gulf that must otherwise have been between them.

There was a big golden chrysanthemum almost the color of her hair. So he thought of Dorice's hair, and her dark eyes, and her perfect lips, and all her royalty.

When the women rose presently, and filed after Mrs. Waymore into the drawing-room, he was left for the first time with half a dozen of his own men guests in his own house. It was then that he had a brief recollection of Ironsides. The men of his own caste around him there would have nothing to do with him. Even the doctor and Percy the lawyer—

The port passed around, and Harri-

son sipped. It seemed to possess a peculiar prerogative; it was his own port, selected with care, and it passed for the first time at his own table around a circle of men all of whom were friendly toward him. Restaurant entertaining? It wasn't to be compared with one's own board and one's own servants and one's decent privacy! That evening Harrison advanced several stages on the road to becoming a member of the great parliament of the British land-owning classes.

In his own drawing-room, after dinner, he watched the women. All these people he had gathered together lived under the law of society. They were decent; they were charming; they were proud; they were communal. The customs of their society were good and pleasant customs. Thus the young man wheeled into line.

There were the gardens; and soon every one was in them—for it was a hot August night, soft as velvet—and he was able to be almost alone with Dorice for a while. Stelle walked down the path in front of them, like a little brown moth now in her gauzy brown gown, accompanied by the most eligible of the younger men. Lady Albright was behind, somewhere near, with Henry Waymore. Yet the lovers were as much alone as they used to be on the summer mornings in the park.

"Well, little thing, well, little darling," he whispered to Dorice, "is everything right? Are you pleased?"

"Oh, Lance! It's almost as if—isn't it?—as if this were our first house party together? It feels as much mine as yours."

"It is all yours, my darling. Do you think I'd have taken a house, and gathered together all these people who don't matter, except for you? And I wanted them to see my luck! I'm the luckiest chap alive!"

"May you continue to think so."

"I shall. Dorice, a month from to-day you'll be all mine. No one can part us any more."

"No one can part us now," said Dorice.

"True for you, dearest. The whole earth couldn't part us. Do you think I don't know *that*?"

"It's wonderful, isn't it?" said Dorice.

"It's very wonderful. But I've always known it would happen to me some day. I always knew, somehow, that there was the girl of girls for me somewhere, and that I should find her, and that I should get her. You see, life's made me rather a cocksure sort of chap, I'm afraid."

"Perhaps you're too cocksure. Don't dare to be," said Dorice.

He laughed.

"Dorice, we're both sure."

"Yes, we are, dear," the girl whispered.

They walked on a little faster, and Lady Albright's voice faded behind. Stelle Gatherby and her cavalier had vanished around a high box hedge. The lovers, too, rounded the corner, and there they were, for a moment, between high-growing, old-fashioned flowers, alone. Dorice went to his arms like a bird to her nest, and put up her pink mouth. Her girlish passion was like a flame. They clung together while he whispered vows upon her lips. He said: "Say 'good night' now, while we can," and they said it over and over. Lady Albright's voice advanced toward the corner, and they parted; it receded again, and instantly they were once more together. They longed for an eternity and could have but a few minutes; the garden was full of footsteps and voices that came like shocks and alarms. And at last, while, by the tall box hedge, he still held Dorice and kissed her and told her again and again of his love as if she did not already believe it, Stelle Gatherby was almost

upon them, her frock fluttering, her buckled feet twinkling, and her white face turned toward them in the gloom. She seemed to flit by like a night moth, the man walking beside her; but her attention had flown from him for a moment. She looked at Dorice and Lance, and smiled for a second as she passed. She was gone, suddenly, round the hedge.

They stood apart, and the spell was broken.

"If only we could be really alone for five minutes!" sighed Dorice.

"We shall soon be as alone as we like for as long as we like. Say 'good night' here, while we can, you dear."

"We've said it."

"We can say it again."

"And then," she said, "we really must go in."

"The world seems full of 'musts' for the unmarried."

Dorice returned his last kiss daintily and composedly, for Stelle had broken the spell, with her quick intrusion, her smile, her sharp, white look through the gloom.

Stelle tapped at Dorice's door and entered. Her hair flowed over her shoulders, and she held a hairbrush in one hand. Dorice's hair was down, and she sat before her glass brushing it.

"May I come in?" said Stelle, advancing. "It seems such ages since we had a talk, and I've such lots to tell you. And surely you've a great deal more to tell me."

Stelle sat down in a cushiony chair, curled up her little mule-shod feet beneath her, and watched Dorice like a cat, as she brushed out her golden hair strand by strand.

"I love your hair," said Stelle.

"How sweet of you!" said Dorice. "And have you really lots to tell me? Because I'm dying for news about anybody."

"I don't know about news exactly.

But I want to hear all about everything."

"What's everything?" the bride elect faltered.

"About you, and Mr. Harrison, and the wedding day, and where'll it be? And what are you wearing? Have you brought any of your trousseau things here to show me?"

Dorice had not brought any part of her trousseau specifically to show to Stelle or to any one else. She had brought things for her own delight, because she could not bear to be parted from them and their promises. Therewith she had filled an extra trunk, which had annoyed her mother. When Stelle, with her dark eyes glittering out of her little pale face, bright as crystal and as hard, asked for a display of these love treasures, Dorice hesitated for a while, continuing to brush her hair with an extra care and vigor, and exclaiming with enthusiasm:

"I positively *must* show you some time while you're here. But I haven't brought *much*, of course. It's mostly at Sunflower's. And what I have is all under piles and piles of things. But —"

"Sunflower's?" Stelle screamed from her chair, with her brush poised for the downward stroke.

"I'm having all my things from her."

"Aunt Marian won't let me. We can't afford it."

"Nor can we," said Dorice hastily. "But an only daughter's wedding doesn't happen every day, and so I suppose they thought— Anyhow— well, I know I'm an awf'ly lucky girl."

"*Sunflower* is the very limit," Stelle sighed. "But of course, as you say, dear, an only daughter's wedding doesn't happen every day—to twenty-five thousand a year."

And she laughed.

Dorice would not take this up. She brushed assiduously, taking immense precautions with each separate strand.

This was not lost on the mouse girl, who was, after all, more of a cat girl to-night. She persisted feverishly.

"Oh, show me! You're the meanest thing if you don't show me this very minute! I love trousseaux. There are always new ideas in them that never saw the light before—at least there are when a girl goes to *Sunflower*. I shall make Aunt Marian get my things there when I want them. But you've taken the only twenty-five-thousand man, and what's left for poor me?"

Again Dorice took no notice of this, but she felt the malice in the air about her. She laid down her brush and braided her hair in two plaits, which she tied with blue ribbon, and a plait hung on either side of her face over her breast, so that she looked like some serene and lovely Gretchen.

She said: "Really, all the things are at the bottom——"

But Stelle cried: "Get them out!"

Dorice went across reluctantly to the trunk, where dreams reposed, dreams woven in crêpe de Chine and silk and lawn and lace. Stelle, uncurling herself, ran after her, and, when the trunk lid was raised, threw herself upon the contents. She hauled them out with rapture, real, not simulated, and with a bitter envy carefully cloaked. Dorice stood by and watched her sitting on the floor, spreading frail chemises on the carpet, unfolding the slim length of gossamer nightgowns, appraising camisoles and caps and jackets and little mules to match. Half of the trousseau was not there, but Dorice had brought the glib "one of each" upon which to feast her eyes in privacy, and now Stelle feasted upon them, too. Also, she extolled them, putting into words things that Dorice had found almost too delicate to be thought; wondering aloud if the bridegroom would not admire, and comparing each little garment, with its angel soul, with the last of the kind she had seen, belonging to

the freak trousseau of a young woman lately starring in revues.

All the while that Stelle talked on, with allusions astonishingly sly in a girl of her years and convent schooling, the other girl loathed her, and hated to see the sacred possessions fondled in her little pale hands. She would have liked to tear from Stelle all the fragile wonders and, crying, "Must you desecrate temples, you little beast?" have turned the key upon them and hidden it away so well that none but herself could ever find it again. But as it was, she endured all, for some conventional reason that imposed restraint, and, standing by, heard Stelle, in the language of flattery, make deceitful mock of the beautiful bridal wear. And a patience came, with the restraint, to Dorice, making of her, as she stood there, more of a fairy Gretchen than ever.

Stelle went on crying:

"I never saw such ducks! Those little self-color tulle frills instead of lace are *too* crafty! It just looks all fluff! What a lot *Sunflower* must know about men! A dressmaker needs to be clever, doesn't she? And this sleeping suit! How did she dream it? Will you wear it the very first——"

Dorice took it from her roughly, and folded it and laid it away. Its holiness was gone; it was a sensuous rag; she hated it. She turned to catch the glint of Stelle's upward glance before the mouse's lashes drooped downward again, as her eyes fastened on the next luxurious little victim.

It was a pale pink camisole trimmed with tiny roses, such as for a short while women loved to wear under transparent blouses. Stelle went on:

"Here's a cunning thing! You *are* clever, my dear. I don't believe you're taking half the trouble over your hats and frocks. Aunt Marian would be awfully shocked at you, I think. Oh, don't be cross. I can't help her stu-

pidity, can I? Try on this cap, do, darling. It *looks* just a duck."

"It won't suit me, with my hair in these plaits."

"Oh-h! Fancy! You'll have to think of all that! Marriage is really a scream, isn't it? Shall you always have to do your hair exactly to suit you at night? Of course, twenty-five thousand a year is worth a little trouble."

"I haven't thought about it," replied Dorice, pale with pride and anger.

"How splendid!" said Stelle, trying the cap over her own flowing hair, with a small, enigmatic smile on her peaked face.

"I don't understand you."

"Oh! And I'm so stupidly simple, too!"

"Well, what's 'splendid'?"

"Don't be snappy, darling. I mean, it's splendid not even to think of twenty-five thousand a year."

"What does Lance's income matter?"

"It would matter to most girls; it would to me."

"I don't care what his income is. He just happens to have it; that's all."

Stelle favored her friend with an indescribable look. She took off the cap and laid it away tenderly, puffing out its crown with tissue paper. Then she spoke:

"Yes, I know, Dorice. It certainly 'happened.' But, after all, it was a cleverly arranged 'happening,' wasn't it? Every one admires him for it."

"I haven't the faintest idea what you mean."

"Oh-h? You don't think I believe that? You've a love. So naïve!"

"I'll make you explain yourself in a moment, Stelle."

"Well, don't get cross with me. If you care so little for twenty-five thousand, I dare say you don't care in the least how it 'happened.'"

"I do dislike people who speak in

inverted commas. They always mean a sneer."

"Do I speak in inverted commas? I'm sure I don't; I'm not clever enough."

"I insist on knowing what you mean about Lance's money."

"I don't mean anything, except what you must know already."

"I know nothing."

Stelle made little round eyes and a little round mouth of innocent trouble.

"But every one knows, Dorice, darling."

"Well, I don't, Stelle. And I *will* know, because you need not suppose that I don't see through your insinuations. People like you should be forced to speak plainly. And when I force you, I dare say you'll have nothing at all worth saying."

"Every one knows."

"You said that before. Now you've got to say something else—and quickly."

"I didn't mean anything, really, dearest. It's an open secret that Mr. Harrison was married before, isn't it?"

During a silence, Stelle looked up with eyes like needles at Dorice, whose slender figure grew suddenly firm as a rock.

"It was—a closed secret—to me," replied Dorice, in a very low voice.

Stelle cried out ejaculations of surprise and dismay, before her repetition of:

"But every one knows! Every one, my dear; *every one!*"

Dorice sat down as if the strength had left her young figure as a current of electricity is turned off, and her face, between the hanging gold braids, was wan. But with a strong realization of the girl's malice, she looked at Stelle.

"'Every one?'" she said, in a small, high, scornful voice. "How long have you known, Stelle?"

Stelle wilted a little. She had known but twelve hours or so, when a gos-

siping woman had told her, but she did not want to say so. She would have liked to exclaim, "Why, *always*, my dear, of course!" and, "I supposed you knew, too." But before she could train her lips on the lies, Dorice detected and rejected them, and said quietly:

"You've only just heard it yourself, Stelle, and you've come here bursting to tell. You think you hurt me, but I trust him too well to believe there is anything which matters that he has not told me."

"I'm just pleased to hear you say so, dear."

"Mother and father don't know, either," said Dorice.

"What makes you think so?"

"I should have known first," said Dorice proudly.

Stelle sighed. She wriggled her thin shoulders, and made big, sad eyes.

"Aunt Marian told me Mr. and Mrs. Waymore knew all about it."

"*They—knew!*" Then Dorice checked herself, held up her head, and asked haughtily: "What has Lady Albright to do with my affairs?"

"Don't be silly," said Stelle coolly. "Every one has a right to talk current gossip. If you want to know, I asked Aunt Marian if it was true that your Lance had been married before, and she said it was; and I asked her if your people knew, and she said she was sure they did. There! That's all to make such a fuss about."

"It is, as you infer, very little indeed."

Stelle had brought her manicure tools. She began on her shining nails, bending her head to hide the excited smile that would flutter to her lips. She sat curled up on the floor beside the big trunk with her feet under her, as she had sat in the chair.

"You're too sensible to be worried over a trifle like that, Dorice, darling."

Dorice sat watching the manipula-

tions of Stelle's hands. Her own brain was alert and quivering, and full of impressions, of which Stelle, a little cool, cruel imp, was one. Presently she sent a remark into the silence. She said:

"It must have been an unhappy marriage. Often people don't want to speak about these things, you know, Stelle. I should not have minded at all if I had never known, for I can trust him. I feel sure it must have been most unhappy."

"You're so sentimental, dear," from Stelle. "Unhappy? It was twenty-five thousand a year."

Stelle went on polishing her nails, but presently, when the quiet became too oppressive, she looked up and saw Dorice's white-stone face.

"Meow! Meow!" said the little cat appealingly, only she translated it into, "Now I *know* you're angry with me for something. But it wasn't my fault that your Lance——"

"Can't you be silent?" Dorice stormed.

"Certainly," replied Stelle, gathering up her tools and herself.

She pattered right to the door on her little mules before the other girl called her back.

"You're not going to tell me half truths! Now you've begun, you can finish the whole story. Sit down again! Out with it! I tell you I will have it if I lock you here all night!"

When Dorice, darting across the floor, had turned the key and abstracted it, Stelle sat down again with a very fine air of mingled sympathy, injury, and reluctance.

"I don't know why you're so angry with me, Dorice."

"I'm not angry with you, you fool. I only want the story."

"Very well," said Stelle, "you shall have it. I'm tired and I want to go to bed, not to be kept here. But if you don't like the story when you've

got it, Dorice, it won't be my fault, will it? I'm sure I didn't want to tell you. However, it's just that Mr. Harrison had not any kind of profession; he just picked up a living in any old way, don't you know? He simply hadn't a bean, and never had had. And Mrs. Thomas Iron, who was more than twice his age, they say—she was the widow of the big shoddy man, you know?—saw him at a hotel, where he was playing the fiddle to the guests after dinner and during tea. And she fell in love at first sight, and proposed to him, and of course he jumped at the chance. They were married at once, and—wasn't it the greatest luck?—she soon died and left him every ha'penny and quite a gorgeous old place in Cheshire. Only the people round, who had known the shoddy manufacturer, wouldn't have anything to do with Mr. Harrison, so after his wife's death he sold the place and had a flat in town and took this shoot. And of course he's such a darling and so rich that every one is delighted to see him, whatever those stuffy old provincials in Cheshire thought about him."

"Enough!" said Dorice in a strident voice. "Enough! Good night, Stelle. Here's the key."

Once more Stelle gathered herself up and pattered to the door; she looked marvelously gratified and sleek. As she turned the key, she looked back, with

her little round eyes of happy innocence, at the stricken girl she left behind her.

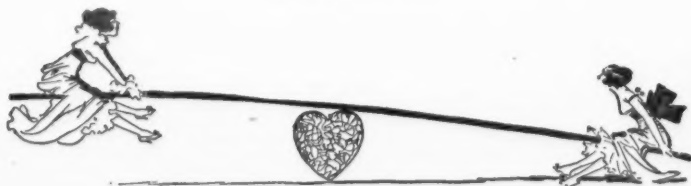
"Meow! Meow! Meow!" added the little cat; only she translated it into: "So, you see, dear, there's nothing at all worth bothering about in the whole story."

Dorice came toward the door swiftly, and Stelle was out in a moment, almost as if she feared violence. But all that Dorice wanted was to turn the key again; this time, on her inviolable privacy. When she had locked the door, she fell upon her bed and lay there in torment, twisting and wondering, but not weeping.

There was a traveling clock on her mantelpiece that struck the half hours, and two half hours struck while she lay helpless on her bed, doing nothing and looking nowhere except blankly up at the ceiling. The striking of the second half hour roused her to sit up. It was twelve o'clock.

The fall of that midnight was to Dorice like the dawn of the day of doom. She sat up and heard it, listening to it with terror and resignation. She rose and went to the door, for she could wait no longer to hear sentence pronounced upon her destiny. She was so composed that when she reached the door, when her hand was already on the knob, she came back for a wrapper and put it oh over her nightdress.

TO BE CONTINUED.



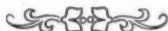
FLATTERY on the tongue of a fool may be an insult, while in the mouth of a wise man it proves a compliment.



The Salt of Life

By Frank E. Evans

Author of "The Way of Broken Men," etc.



WHILE Hope Wetherill's first appraisal of Stephen Clive did not exactly parallel those of Westport, it must be remembered that Westport's background of thirty years made for greater clarity. Westport had watched him grow from pink rompers and chubby legs to the dignity of a blue sweater emblazoned with its varsity letter, with the breadth of shoulders that go with a varsity letter and the firmly chiseled features and salient chin of a grenadier.

Her background was made up of an afternoon on the Chauncey tennis court and the dance at the country club, before she found him on her right at the Wigton dinner. They had exchanged opinions on the tantalizing approach to the twelfth hole of the country-club course, and discovered a number of mutual friends, before they came to the inevitable commonplace of the war abroad.

"I'd be mightily tempted, if I could arrange my law practice," he confided to her, "to take a fling at it over there. Captain McCready, of the Northumberland Fusiliers, is on Haig's staff, and he could fix me up with some sort of a volunteer detail. We got to be great pals up in Ottawa two years ago, when we each got our first moose on the same day. And then, as Kitchener put it, it's 'the salt of life,' and I'd like a taste before settling down to law."

"And kill some chap with whom you

have no quarrel," broke in a cool, precise voice on Hope Wetherill's left.

She turned, rather perturbed by her neglect of him. She knew only that Frederick Towne was a scientific re-cluse whom the Wigtons had snared for the dinner through the claim of a distant relationship. His dark, clever face was creased with a sardonic smile that brought out deep lines in unexpected places, and the lines made him seem older when he returned her look with a slow laugh.

"I would hardly have expected such a stinging reproof from a man with your dark past," countered Clive.

"No reproof, only that I prefer impaling butterflies to men."

"Butterflies! That is an interesting hobby!" she hastened to reassure him, conscious that Clive's taunt had flushed his sensitive face. Yet, she noticed with a touch of admiration, it had not hurried a syllable of that very precise diction. "I've always thought that if I were a man, I'd like to find 'the salt of life' in just such a thing. Where would one go to find a very rare butterfly, Mr. Towne?" she appealed.

"One of my dearest friends, Jean Duchanel," he answered, "went as far as the Solomon Islands for a perfect specimen of a certain butterfly."

There was the gleam of the true zealot in his deep-set gray eyes, and his long, slim fingers halted in their task of arranging crumbs in a geometric design on the table.

"Or"—she caught up the thread again, aware that Mr. Frederick Towne was equally as interesting a dinner partner as the grenadierlike Clive—"to hunt orchids, or chase volcanoes, as one man I know does. You must have done lots of interesting things like that."

"No, indeed," he protested, "unless it was the unfortunate incident to which Clive referred as my dark past. An English orchid hunter and I made a trip to New Guinea a few years ago in search of a certain orchid. We found a superb lot of them in a native burial ground out there, some of them growing up through the skulls that lay on the surface. When we had made arrangements to get them out of the country, the natives treacherously attacked us. They had a silly superstition that we had disturbed the spirits of their ancestors by trespassing on the burial ground. When I shot my man it was not in anger, nor did I fire from a so-called sporting instinct. It was only in self-defense, Miss Weatherill." The deep-set eyes of the dreamer shone in their appeal to her for justification. "But I would rather justify myself from a purely scientific point of view." She marveled at his precise, unhurried way. "You see, it was absolutely necessary, in the interests of science, that we should get those orchids out of the country. They made quite a stir over in England."

"You can find no excuse for my going to war, then," Clive flung back, "but you would risk your life for a flower?"

"I fail to see the parallel," was the ready answer. "A man should risk his life if it means the advancement of any science but that of war. War has no glamour for me. Gas bombs and hand grenades, barbed wire and vitriol, have stripped all that away. I can think of no more sordid life than that of the trenches. Every day the war lasts

means years of retrogression for the fine arts. Think of the stained glass in the ruins of Rheims or the wild-rose design on the archivolt of Amiens. Dust and rubble now!"

"Yet your friend Duchanel is hurling bombs over there," Clive retorted, "and he is a man of science."

"He is a Frenchman fighting against invasion, and not for the sport of it. Sad work for a man of his training, but quite defensible under the circumstances. And while he is fighting, I'm keeping up his work for him by editing the proofs of his Solomon Islands expedition. You see, Miss Wetherill, after the six months of mosquitoes and poor cooking that I endured out in New Guinea, I gave up active field work for research and editing."

The ensuing weeks of the summer were for Hope Wetherill a sensitized plate on which the images of Frederick Towne and Stephen Clive developed slowly. It was inevitable that the latter should see the more of her. Adept at outdoor games as he was himself, her sang-froid in playing bunker shots and her deadly backhand return at tennis won his open admiration.

Of Frederick Towne, still engrossed with the Duchanel proofs, she saw much less. Yet from those infrequent meetings she gleaned an insight into his complex nature that had been withheld from the rest of the little summer world of Westport. His keen sense of beauty, which had made butterflies and orchids his life work, responded without reserve to the appeal of her own flowerlike beauty. Tennis and golf bored him, he admitted to her with the directness of a scientific statement. He far preferred, he confessed without equivocation, a wicker chair on the wide club porches with his pipe and pouch of tobacco.

As their friendship grew, she found it more and more difficult to reconstruct that scene in the burial ground

of New Guinea. She knew that never before had she met a man with the same exquisite appreciation of books and art, or with the same native deference to her sex.

She and Stephen Clive found him, late one afternoon, in his favorite corner of the porches, thin legs stretched to a luxurious limit, huddled in a wicker armchair, slate-blue smoke spirals mounting above his head. They were in their tennis clothes, aglow with health, and enthusiastic over the condition of the courts they had just left. He hurried to his feet, rapped out the dottle of his pipe, and greeted them in his unemotional way.

Clive, after his usual banter, excused himself. Towne was deep in an explanation of the protective coloring of certain butterflies of the Solomon Islands, as advanced in Jean Duchanel's proofs, when he returned.

"I wanted your opinion on this revolver, Towne," Clive said, when Hope had gravely nodded her head in approval of Duchanel's theories. "You'd hardly choose it to hunt butterflies with, but it's the kind I'd want in a tight corner. It's a real man stopper, one of a lot of .45 double-action revolvers that Billy Shipman's plant is making for the Russians. Thought you'd like to see it, but of course I didn't want to bring back New Guinea, if you're not interested."

There was no sign of resentment in the cool reply, but Hope saw the sensitive face flush at the old taunt.

"It is interesting, Clive, quite so," was his judicial verdict, as he rolled the gun about in his slim fingers.

Had she been a man, there would have been for her a convincing quality in the trick of that roll, which men who love revolvers acquire without being conscious of it.

"I should judge that it would, as you say, make an ideal man stopper. I doubt, though, whether I could hold

such a heavy gun on the target long enough to make sure of my aim. Duchanel, who first showed me into the mysteries of ordnance, would go into ecstasies over it. He showed me a rather interesting trick once with just such a gun."

A waiter was placing their glasses on a near-by table when a woman's cry of fright from the direction of the tennis courts broke in on the quiet of the porches. There was a scuffle of hurrying feet, and around the hedge that bordered the courts came a flying knot of players. A caddy boy swarmed up an apple tree in mad haste and from that vantage point sent up shrill yells. A new note, that carried the solution of the mysterious uproar, came in the frenzied baying of one of the pack of hounds that had survived from the hunting days of the club. A moment later, he cleared the hedge in a great leap, and there was white at his jaws as he headed straight as a lance for the group on the porch.

"Good God!" gasped Clive. "The brute's mad—and there's not a cartridge in the gun! Come on, Hope—Towne—we've got to get out of here!" His voice rose above all the tumult in its urgency of fear.

The quick, precise voice of Towne broke in:

"Quick, into the club with you both! No, no, don't bother about me, Miss Wetherill. I'll stand him off."

As she gained the open door, Hope Wetherill turned and saw him spring out onto the lawn with an agility surprising in one who disdained athletics. His right arm was flexed to its slim length and the sun struck a lance of light from the blue-black barrel of the uplifted revolver. Four feet away, the maddened hound made his leap. She saw Towne side-step with surprising litheness, and his arm came down like a trip hammer at the same instant. There was a sickening crunch, a wail

that was neither human nor animal, and the hound fell, spread-eagled, at the edge of the porch.

For a moment he looked down at its lifeless body and then hurried to her, just outside of the door.

"You should have stayed indoors, Miss Wetherill. I might have missed him, you know, for I had almost forgotten that little trick of Duchanel's," came the unhurried reproof. "But what's wrong here? Oh, I'm sorry."

Clive was lying across the threshold of the open door, his face white as chalk and his body inert.

"I—I think he fainted," she stammered, and then, to her mortification, broke into an hysterical laugh.

She swayed, and Towne was at her side, his arm about her waist.

"There, there, he'll come around in a minute or so."

All the while he reassured her, he was leading her to the chair she had left but a few moments before, talking as a nurse might to an overwrought child. His free hand gripped the Russian 45, and its front sight dripped red.

"Now you're all right and I'll look after Clive, if you don't mind."

He patted her hand, oblivious to the fact that the membership of the club was rallying to the spot.

Clive was sitting up, his broad shoulders resting against the bended knee of a club attendant, drinking from a glass that a young doctor held to his lips.

"I—I seem to have made an ass of myself," she heard him gasp. All the old insouciance had gone from his voice. "What was it, Towne? I remember seeing a mad dog charging at us across the lawn, and getting Miss Wetherill through this door. Then it all went blank."

"You just keeled over in a faint, old man, after getting Miss Wetherill indoors," she heard Towne answer.

Hope found herself gripping the flat arms of her chair while she fought

down the impulse to get to her feet and destroy at a word the case that Towne was building up for the rehabilitation of his rival.

"Too much tennis, in a hot sun did it for you, old man," Towne rattled on.

"I guess you're right, Towne. I did play too much. Four sets, and the last as tough a deuce set as I've played this summer. Still, that's all right: I was true to the rule, 'Women first.'"

Hope, still shaken by the passing of the crisis, flinched in her chair. The words had come with all the old bravado that had once appealed to her as the index of a grenadier spirit that would brook no obstacle, that would meet any crisis with unbroken front.

Four sets and the last a deuce one! There had been but two, and she had won the last!

She slipped out of the chair, stole past the ring of men about the doorway unobserved, and raced for the roadway on feet that trembled. When the maid came to her an hour later, she was lying, fully dressed, on her bed, and her eyes were fixed unseeing on the ceiling overhead.

Back on the clubhouse porch, the young physician, now that Clive no longer needed his aid, bent over the dead hound and examined with professional interest a clean, knifelike cut in back of the right ear. He looked up at Frederick Towne, who was smoking his pipe with imperturbable calm.

"That front sight bit into the skull like a high-speed drill," he remarked. "He must have been dead when he hit the ground. How in the world did you ever think of striking him with the front-sight leaf? Nine men out of ten would have used the butt."

"A very dear friend of mine, Jean Duchanel—Clive has heard me speak of him—picked up the trick from a slaver captain out in the Solomons. You can see for yourself that it's far better than the butt."

He held out the revolver. At the muzzle's end, the sight leaf, a full half inch deep, stood out like a spur.

"Your friend was right," chuckled the young physician.

"And if you struck at a man that way," added Towne, "and he caught at the barrel, he'd tear his hand to pieces trying to wrest it away."

A lively murmur of approval indorsed his statement, and Towne, his face flushed, drew about him his habitual cloak of reserve.

Hope Wetherill was dressing for the usual Saturday-night dinner dance at the country club the next evening, when her maid brought up a square envelope on a tray. She had a curious feeling that the handwriting on the envelope was the index of the precise, methodical habit of Frederick Towne. She had read but a few lines when she knew that her intuition had been right. The note ran:

MY DEAR MISS WETHERILL: I had expected to see you to-night at the country club to say an *au revoir* and to ask for your blessing on my errand, but my steamer connection will not allow of the slightest delay. Besides, there is the passport. On returning home yesterday, after that unfortunate occurrence, I found a cable from Jean Duchanel's sister, advising me that Jean had been dangerously wounded by the premature explosion of a hand grenade.

I leave by the *Lafayette*. I know that he will want me, and if God spares him for his country, I will stay with him until he is on the highroad to health. If the wound is a mortal one, and those inflicted by the hand grenades are particularly lethal, I shall stay and qualify myself for the duties that he has been discharging. Jean is more than a soldier fighting for his native land; he is a scientist of rare promise.

I have thought it all out with care. The chances, figured from a scientific standpoint, are twenty to one in a war like this. Some authorities have put it at seven days for an officer and four weeks for an enlisted man. I would go into the ranks, of course, but if I am admitted into the bombers' squad, I could hardly look forward to the exemption from disability enjoyed by the enlisted man,

for bombing is particularly hazardous. But in my heart I feel that Jean is to be spared. Our friend Stephen Clive would call it a "hunch."

How the name grated!

I am taking over the proofs. They will help him through his convalescent period, and I may finish them at sea.

You'll not mind, I know, when I tell you what a rare summer this has been for me. There was never one before in which I found real pleasure beyond those of my butterflies and flowers. This summer they have not brought me a tithe of the joy that knowing you has. I shall never forget our talks. And I may write this, too, because I know how hopeless it would be for me to wish for more than your sweet friendship. The rest, I feel, is for a better man than I. That makes it easier for me to go, and blunts the edge of my forlorn hope. And now, my dear friend, *au revoir*.

It was slow reading, despite the meticulous care with which each letter was formed. It was slow because its simple tale of a supreme sacrifice misted her eyes with tears. And he had bared his heart to her only because he thought it would bring no hurt to her!

"I wonder," she pondered, "what Duchanel's sister is like."

The maid came to the door with a light scarf. Its delicate blending of colors suggested the hues of some rare butterfly.

"Mr. Clive is waiting in the living room, Miss Hope."

"No, Sanders. You must ask him to excuse me. I'm not going to-night. Tell him I have a splitting headache. Tell him any thing you like, Sanders."

The door closed. She drew the scarf about her shoulders, buried her face in the shimmer of its ends, and slipped to her knees. Her lips moved in a silent prayer that agitated the fine texture of the scarf where her lips were pressed against it. Where the light fell on its troubled surface, it was like the trembling of a butterfly's wings.



PLAYS AND PLAYERS

By

ALAN DALE

IT has often been said that the very best people do not make a success of it when they try to write for the theater; it has also been gently insinuated that the very best people do not go to the theater at all. If the latter be true, then the former goes without saying, for how could anybody write for the theater without going, at least occasionally, to see what brand of work the public wants?

Such feverish remarks are due to the innate snobbery of those who make them. Who are the very best people forsooth? They cannot be those who are merely rich enough to figure in the Sunday papers, for these are always at the play, paraded in the lists of "among those present." They are probably those who have been credited with unusual intellects and "brilliant minds." They have written books or have sponsored "cults," and they have been rampageously advertised. They appeal to critics, who are, of course, the most virulent sort of snobs. Such undoubtedly are the very best people!

The statement that they do not invariably make a success of it when they try to write for the theater should—but probably doesn't—fill them with joy, for what does success mean? Mr. Chesterton says that books on success are usually written by men who cannot succeed even in writing books, but success really means the knack of obtain-

ing money or worldly position. The very best people should rejoice—but do not!—at the fact that their plays are unsuccessful, for that signifies that the vulgar mob refrains from assimilating their precious thoughts. Still, the very best people must want sordid success or they wouldn't worry about the theater at all. After all, they must be in the same well-filled boat as the very worst. Mr. Granville Barker, who is responsible for "The Morris Dance" at the Little Theater, must possess the same squalid aspirations for box-office returns as Mr. Theodore Kremer, who wrote "The Fatal Wedding" and "Fast Life in New York." My own idea is—and please don't say that I am cynical—that the very best people would not hesitate to write scenarios for the "movies" if they imagined that they could get away with it!

I love the very best people. They are so unconsciously amusing. They are very easy to detect. Even the uninitiated may recognize the very best people. Whenever I notice that a particularly unworthy play receives elongated criticism and erudite analysis, I know that it has been signed by a very best person. Critics are name worshipers; they grovel in the dust at the shrines of those who have been pin-nacled. Even a "society" favorite, famous for pink teas and punk dinners, is entitled to greater consideration than

a mere nonentity, struggling for a foothold. It is the label that counts. Of late, the very best people have been writing for Washington *Spare* Players and organizations holding forth in the purlieus of the city, and the critics have flocked to do them honor. Take, for instance, Lord Dunsany—to my mind, the dullest of the whole crowd. He has been showered with more reading matter than many of the most successful playwrights who are not branded "very best." And Lord Dunsany is doubly "very best," for not only is he "literary" in the most approved dark-green style, but he owns a title—something not to be sneezed at nowadays.

During the month I have in mind, the very best people have been extremely busy actually writing for the theater—I might say condescending to write for it. Mr. Granville Barker, who once had missions with Shakespeare and with odd lighting effects, and who further wrote a very much discussed play called "Waste" that was furtively played in London before the very best people there, sank to our unworthy level and far below it—if possible—with "The Morris Dance" at the Little Theater, as I said above.

Mr. Barker is really one of the very best of the very best. Mr. Winthrop Ames, whom I have always regarded as a singularly artistic manager, undertook to "present" Barker's play. When I say "present," I think I am mistaken, for Mr. Ames, according to the program, merely "allowed" it. Exactly why he did this is not at all clear. Presumably it was for the same reason that would prompt critics to write extensively of the piece—to wit, that Barker belongs to the very best. "The Morris Dance" was a tremendous surprise, for it proved to be a perfectly crude and unbalanced farce, based on Robert Louis Stevenson's and Lloyd Osbourne's novel "The Wrong Box." Probably you remember the story, deal-

ing with the misadventures of a gentleman and a corpse. The very best of Granville Barkers did this all up in the most extravagant fashion, and certainly succeeded in becoming the very worst. The persistent profanity was extraordinary. Mr. Barker had evidently made a tour of our theaters and discovered the melancholy fact that the mob invariably laughs at profanity. When in doubt, use a "cuss" word is the maxim of the popular playwright.

However, the least one can expect of the very best people is that they steer clear of the pellucid methods of plebeian success. Instead of humoring our mania for cheap profanity, Mr. Barker should have carefully lived up to his reputation of very best, even if he believed that we should weep in anguish when bereaved of our loved expressions. "The Morris Dance" might have been the work of the very worst, but Mr. Barker's name and Mr. Ames' polite championship insured the wretched farce considerable attention. One critic actually said: "There is much that is highly amusing . . . in 'The Morris Dance,'" and then remarked that Barker had "added an exhilarated lightness and wit for which you will search in vain the pages of the book." Alack and alas! It pays to belong to the very best.

That ancient and much-bewhiskered device of a conversation between a man on the stage and another in the audience was indulged in before the play began, and Mr. Barker surely did his best to inform us of the fact that he had studied our barbaric and untutored minds not wisely, but too well. He had taken our measure. The very best had confronted the very worst. He had given us no problems and no precious thoughts to disturb our equanimity. He had realized us, and, in retaliation, I must say that we realized him.

The unusual intellect had succumbed to a completely mistaken estimate of

these United States. 'Tis true, 'tis pity, and pity 'tis, 'tis true.

Mr. Gilbert Chesterton is the author of "Magic," a comedy produced at Maxine Elliott's Theater. Chesterton has long languished among the very best; in fact, it is no secret that certain dramatic critics do their utmost to imitate his delightful tricks of logic and expression, and such books of his as "Varied Types" and "Orthodoxy" have frequently been reproduced in current criticisms. Chesterton has become a sort of fetish to modern writers. They adore him, prostrate themselves at his shrine, and are sometimes gracious enough to mention him. "Magic" was announced as Chesterton's only play, a fact that has added to his reputation as one of the very best people. There was a great powwow at Maxine Elliott's Theater on the opening night of this comedy, and several of those who imitate Chesterton's style were present.

I recall one of Chesterton's articles on the fallacy of success. "To begin with," he said, "there is no such thing as success. Or, if you like to put it so, there is nothing that is not successful. That a thing is successful merely means that it is; a millionaire is successful in being a millionaire, and a donkey in being a donkey. Any live man has succeeded in living; and a dead man may have succeeded in committing suicide."

Under those circumstances, I think I may say that Chesterton in "Magic" was successful in being Chesterton, and, I fear, in little else. You see, unlike Barker, Chesterton made no feeble bid for vulgar popularity. His play actually dealt with the psychical—sometimes called the supernormal—and that is not even respectable. Chesterton's object was to prove that very fact.

His central character was a psychical gentleman who deplored his own strange powers. He could move chairs without contact; he could make pic-

tures stir on the wall; he could change the color of lights before your very eyes. The world called him a conjurer, for the reason that it is respectable to conjure, and the acts can be satisfactorily explained as merely clever tricks.

In the play, a fresh youth, typical of the ignorance that exists on the subject of the supernormal, sees all these uncanny things and becomes mentally unbalanced. There is the evidence of his own eyes and of his own senses, but it is all so inexplicable that he temporarily loses his reason. The only way to restore that reason is for the psychic to lie—mendaciously to "confess" that the acts *were* all due to trickery. This he does, and the result is perfectly satisfactory. I was tremendously interested in "Magic," just as I was tremendously interested in Sir Oliver Lodge's new book called "Raymond," also dealing with the supernormal.

This instance of the very best writing for the stage turned out quite admirably. Of course, it was absolutely misunderstood. Mr. Chesterton took no pains to popularize himself. He rang in no "cuss" words and introduced no "comedy." It was a case of take or leave. I imagine that the average person adopted the latter alternative.

"Magic" had positively none of the elements of success, and Chesterton, of course, knew it. It was really a play for thoughtful people, dealing with the kind of thoughts that they hate. There was not one glimmer of sex in it, which was dreadful. One scene between the psychic and a minister was most masterly. The berating by the psychic of this gentleman of the cloth for refusing to believe in miracles when his very living depended upon his acceptance of those chronicled in the Bible was dramatic in an unusual way. The character of the psychic was most delightfully acted by O. P. Heggie, an actor whom it is a joy to watch. "Magic" mystified

even those who worship at the shrine of the very best, and that fact is interesting.

Still another very best! This was a little play by Galsworthy that preceded "Magic" and was called "The Little Man." This was so meek, so insignificant, and so undramatic that, from an unknown pen, it would have been dismissed as irrelevant. However, Galsworthy has long been imbedded among the very best, and critics talk of him with bated breath. He can do no wrong. They would break any engagement for a Galsworthy play, and if, for instance, Miss Clare Kummer's witty and entertaining comedy, "A Successful Calamity," at the Booth Theater, were pitted against Mr. Galsworthy in Rivington or Forsyth Streets, they would journey to those lackluster localities.

I thought "A Little Man" quite stupid. It told the story of a peasant at an Austrian railway station, who, in trying to help a woman on to a train, finds himself stranded with her baby. The child is suspected of having typhus, and the passengers are very uneasy. Later, the mother comes on by another train, and the situation is saved. One or two fairly amusing characters occur, but "The Little Man" would never have seen the light of *our* hilarious day if the Galsworthy label had not been in unmistakable evidence.

The same may be said of a playlet by Shaw produced by Gertrude Kingston under the title of "Overruled." Shaw, of course, although among the very best, *has* made a colossal success of writing for the theater. In fact, even the very worst has done no more than G. B. S. "Overruled," however, had no possible excuse—not even that of the box office—and may be dismissed as merely superfluous. Even the very best people must relax at times and be just ordinarily foolish. We all went to see "Overruled" and we surely did

our best to appreciate it, feeling that perchance we might succeed.

It is really quite a pleasure to get away from this hothouse atmosphere of the very best to the perfectly unnecessary theater where you like what you like just because you like it and not for any snobby reason. Miss Clare Kummer's play, "A Successful Calamity," with William Gillette as the star, was most fascinating—and Miss Kummer, at present, is among the very worst.

She succeeded by dint of sparkling, coruscant dialogue, than which there is no keener delight. The "plot" of "A Successful Calamity" was distinctly banal. It was so banal that one might almost have suspected it of having been the work of the very best! However, the humor of the characterizations was so exquisite and so unpremeditated that the little play made a remarkable success. Although Miss Kummer was known in very worst circles as the composer of that awe-inspiring song called "Dearie," and also of "Good Gracious Annabelle," these shortcomings were overlooked, and "A Successful Calamity" achieved that wondrous feat of setting a New York audience laughing!

Lucky and deservedly lucky Clare Kummer! Later on, she will surely win a place among the very best, and then we shall be forced to approve what at present we spontaneously adore. Some day she may write a play worthy of the Neighborhood Theater in Grand Street.

"The Wanderer," founded on Wilhelm Schmittborn's "Der Verlorene Sohn," by Maurice V. Samuels, who is not quite the very best, made a fervent appeal to those who like biblical stories because they *are* biblical and to those who like them because they are well disguised in modernity. It was the legend of the Prodigal Son, furnished with a saucy picture of *Nadina's* house in

Jerusalem, where the Prodigal indulged in riotous living. The first and third acts—the best, I thought—were biblical, and the second was disguised. The popular success of the play may depend upon the second. *Nadina's* house was like a New York roof garden, with a cabaret performance, and the very worst people—those who buy theater tickets—love that sort of thing.

Although Molière is so old that he is neither very best nor very worst, I consider Mr. and Mrs. Coburn's production of "The Imaginary Invalid" one of the most enjoyable events of the season. Bernard Shaw could have done no better than this, although he did try his hand at it in "The Doctor's Dilemma." The piece was so admirably acted that it commanded rapt attention. Of course Molière has no "class"

to-day with theatrical snobs, but just the same his satire is delectable and subtle.

May I mention as among the very worst, and therefore among the most successful, productions of the season, two musical comedies entitled respectively "You're in Love," at the Casino, and "Oh, Boy," at the Princess? I dread to say that I reveled in those musical performances, but I did. I'm awfully sorry about it, especially as I have been reviewing only the very best or chiefly that.

If the very best would take two nights off and visit the Casino and the Princess, just to realize what genuine amusement means, they might—I say they *might*—kick away their ornamental pinnacles and come down to earth advantageously.



THE CHALLENGE

SOMEbody whistles clearly down the street,
And Chloe hears and fails to turn the page.
The mocking bird repeats it from his cage;
The jasmine floods the room with odors sweet.

Shy wings are stirring in the garden hedge;
Wild bird the prisoned bird would greet.
Somebody whistles clearly down the street;
The jasmine branches tap the window ledge.

Its blossoms flood the room with odors sweet.
The elders talk of divers dreary things—
Of deaths and wars and maids and marketings.
Somebody whistles clearly down the street.

So Time flings down to Youth the gage,
In Life's grim lists his fate to meet.
Somebody whistles clearly down the street,
And Chloe hears—and fails to turn the page.

ELIZABETH HANLY.

Talks With Ainslee's Readers

DID you read the Countess Barcynska's sparkling novel, "The Honey Pot," when it appeared a year ago? Those of you who did will welcome the opportunity to meet all your old friends and enemies in the Countess Barcynska's new novel, "Love Maggy," starting in AINSLEE'S for June. You will renew acquaintance with Maggy herself, now Lady Chalfont. There is nothing of the painted chorus girl about her now. In her place is a beautiful woman, sufficiently sedate and very appreciative of her new position in life. But she still has all her quick sympathies, the same ready wit, and the old charm.

Then there is Lord Chalfont, her husband; Alexandra Meers, the "Lexie" of old, now married herself; Fred Woolf, who is Maggy's very unpleasant "past" from "The Honey Pot" and in this new story seeks to cast his shadow over her happy present; Woolf's wife, Lady Susan; and all the others.

Those of you who have not already met these entertaining people have a treat in store, for although the new story is a sequel to "The Honey Pot," it is complete in itself, and in no way dependent upon its predecessor.

"Love Maggy," Lord Chalfont begs of his godmother, the old Marchioness of Shelford. How could any one help but love Maggy?

THE complete novelette for June is "The Butterfly Man," a charming romance by Elmer Brown Mason, the man who wrote "Gloves, Love, and Monte Carlo." E. Temple Thurston, Elizabeth Newport Hepburn, and Wil-

liam Almon Wolff are among the contributors of really unusual short stories, May Edginton concludes her absorbing serial, "The Man Who Broke the Rule," and Albert Payson Terhune continues his "Men of Mystery" series with a fascinating account of Eleazar Williams, the American who is supposed by many to have been Louis XVII., "the lost dauphin." Mr. Terhune makes out a most convincing case for him.

IN reading "The Salt of Life" in this issue you may have questioned the plausibility of the hero's method of dealing with a mad dog. Would it be possible for him to kill the animal instantly by clubbing him over the head with the sight end of his gun? We submitted the question to the best authority on firearms that we know, who happens to be Captain Frank E. Evans, the author of the story, himself. He vouches for the incident in his story.

Captain Evans was for years one of the crack rifles of the U. S. Marine Corps. He captained the Marine Corps Rifle team three years and acted as adjutant for the American team which won the Palma Trophy at Ottawa in 1907. In 1908 he acted as adjutant for the American Rifle team which won the Olympic Trophy from Great Britain, Australia, Canada, France, Norway, Sweden, and Greece, at Bisley, England. He was on the relief expedition to Martinique at the time of the Mt. Pelée eruption, and has seen foreign service in the Philippines, the West Indies, and in Panama, following the secession of Panama from Colombia in 1903.

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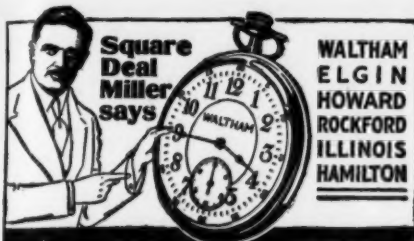
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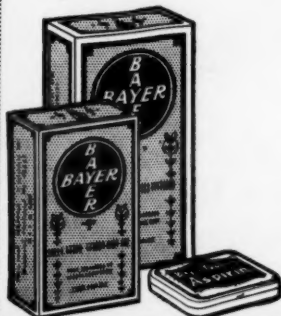
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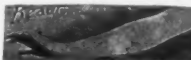
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By Fannie Hurst

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The heroine is a modern Ruth, who in her own way and in her own time lives out the beautiful promise of her prototype, "Whither thou goest I will go; and where thou lodgest, I will lodge; thy people shall be my people, and thy God shall be my God."

In the same Metropolitan, is a great baseball story, "Bingles and Black Magic," by Hugh Fullerton, and a Leroy Scott Detective Clifford story. Also the love

story of the girl who wanted to go in the movies by Jo-sette Gerrish.

The facts of life are well faced, too! William Hard, back after six months in London for the Metropolitan, has an enlightening article on "England at War."

A commanding contribution is an article by Lord Northcliffe. He compares lawyer-governed America with group-governed England much to our disadvantage. There is another instalment of the "Adventures and Letters of Richard Harding Davis," which has been the literary event of the year.

Theodore Roosevelt, who writes exclusively for the Metropolitan, spent a busy day in the Municipal Court of Philadelphia where some practical Christianity is taking the place of ponderous Blackstone. What he saw and what he thinks of the work done, the Colonel sets down in an able piece of reporting, warm with the human touch that is the Colonel's when he writes of good intentions and common sense mixing successfully.

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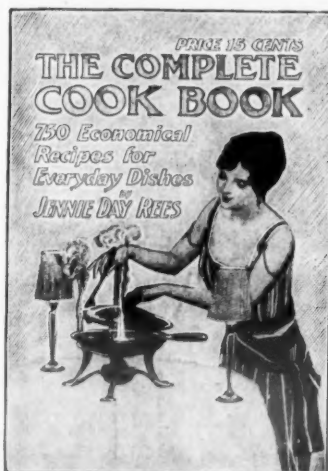
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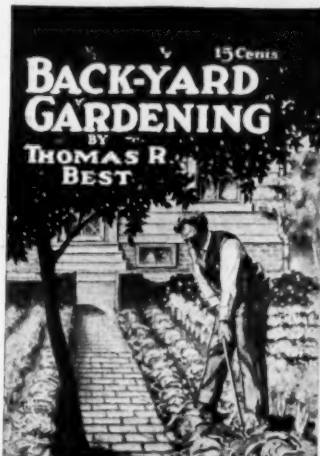
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SINCE the remarkable discovery of organic iron, Nuxated Iron "For Nuxate," as the French call it, has taken the country by storm. It is conservatively estimated that over three million persons annually are taking it in this country alone. Most astonishing results are reported from its use by both physicians and laymen. So much so that doctors predict that we shall soon have a new age of far more beautiful, rosy-cheeked women and vigorous iron men.

Dr. Ferdinand King, a New York physician and medical author, when interviewed on the subject, said: "There can be no vigorous iron men without iron. Pallor means anemia. Anemia means iron deficiency. The skin of anemic men and women is pale. The flesh flabby. The muscles lack tone; the brain fags and the memory fails, and often they become weak, nervous, irritable, despondent and melancholy. When the iron goes from the blood of women, the roses go from their cheeks.

"In the most common foods of America, the starches, sugars, table syrups, candies, polished rice, white breads, soda crackers, biscuits, macaroni, spaghetti, tapioca, sago, farina, degenerated corn-meal, no longer is iron to be found. Refining processes have removed the iron of Mother Earth from these impoverished foods, and silly methods of home cooking, by throwing down the waste pipe the water in which our vegetables are cooked, are responsible for another grave iron loss.

"Therefore, if you wish to preserve your youthful vim and vigor to a ripe old age, you must supply the iron deficiency in your food by using some form of organic iron, just as you would use salt when your food has not enough salt."

Dr. E. Sauer, a Boston physician, who has studied abroad in great European Medical Institutions, said: "As I have said a hundred times over, organic iron is the greatest of all strength builders. If people would only take Nuxated Iron when they feel weak or run-down, instead of dosing themselves with habit-forming drugs, stimulants and alcoholic beverages I am convinced that in this way they could ward off disease, preventing it becoming organic in thousands of cases and thereby the lives of thousands might be saved who now die every year from pneumonia, grippe, kidney, liver, heart trouble and other dangerous maladies. The real and true cause which started their disease was nothing more nor less than a weakened condition brought on by a lack of iron in the blood.

"Not long ago a man came to me who was nearly half a century old and asked me to give him a preliminary examination for life insurance. I was astonished to find him with the blood pressure of a boy of 20 and as full of vigor, vim and vitality as a young man; in fact, a young man he really was, notwithstanding his age. The secret, he said, was taking iron—Nuxated Iron had filled him with renewed life. At 30 he was in bad health; at 46 he was care worn and nearly all in. Now at 50, after taking Nuxated Iron, a miracle of vitality and his face beaming with the buoyancy of youth. Iron is absolutely necessary to enable your blood to change food into living tissue. Without it, no matter how much or what you eat, your food merely passes through you without doing you any good. You don't get the strength out of it, and as a consequence you become weak, pale and sickly looking, just like a plant trying to grow in a soil deficient in iron. If you are not strong or well, you owe it to yourself to make the following test: See how long you can work or how far you can walk without becoming tired. Next take two five-grain tablets of ordinary nuxated iron three times per day after meals for two weeks. Then test your strength again and see how much you have gained. I have seen dozens of nervous, run-down people who were ailing all the while double their strength and endurance and entirely rid themselves of all



symptoms of dyspepsia, liver and other troubles in from ten to fourteen days' time simply by taking iron in the proper form. And this, after they had in some cases been doctoring for months without obtaining any benefit. But don't take the old forms of reduced iron, iron acetate, or tincture of iron simply to save a few cents. The iron demanded by Mother Nature for the red coloring matter in the blood of her children is, alas! not that kind of iron. You must take iron in a form that can be easily absorbed and assimilated to do you any good, otherwise it may prove worse than useless. Many an athlete and prize-fighter has won the day simply because he knew the secret of great strength and endurance and filled his blood with iron before he went into the fray; while many another has gone down in inglorious defeat simply for the lack of iron."

Dr. James, late of the United States Public Health Service, says: "Patients in an enervated and de-vitalized state of health—those, for instance, convalescing from protracted fevers, those suffering from a long-standing case of anemia, all such people in my opinion, need iron. Of late, there has been brought to my attention, Nuxated Iron. In practice, I have found this an ideal restorative and uplifting agent in these cases above mentioned."

NOTE—Nuxated iron, which is prescribed and recommended above, by physicians in such a great variety of cases, is not a patent medicine nor secret remedy, but one which is well known to druggists and whose iron constituents are widely prescribed by eminent physicians both in Europe and America. Unlike the older inorganic iron products, it is easily assimilated, does not injure the teeth, make them black, nor upset the stomach; on the contrary, it is a most potent remedy in nearly all forms of indigestion as well as for nervous, run-down conditions. The manufacturers have such great confidence in nuxated iron that they offer to forfeit \$100.00 to any charitable institution if they cannot take any man or woman under 60 who lacks iron, and increase their strength 100 per cent or over in four weeks' time, provided they have no serious organic trouble. They also offer to refund your money if it does not at least double your strength and endurance in ten days' time. It is dispensed by all good druggists.

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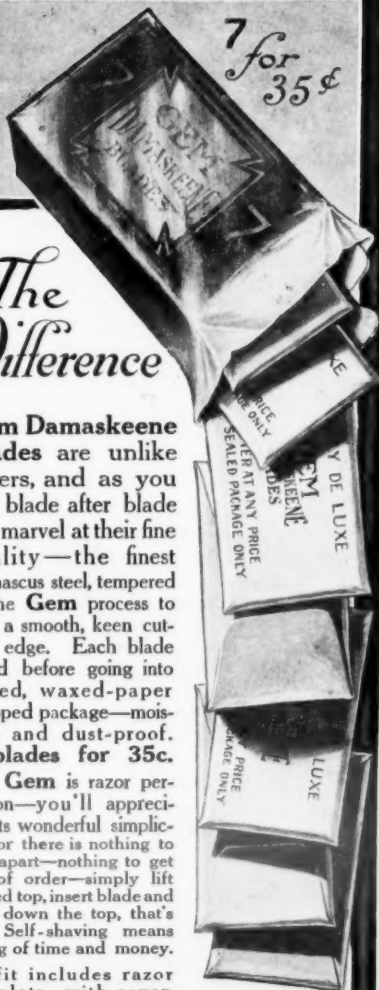
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